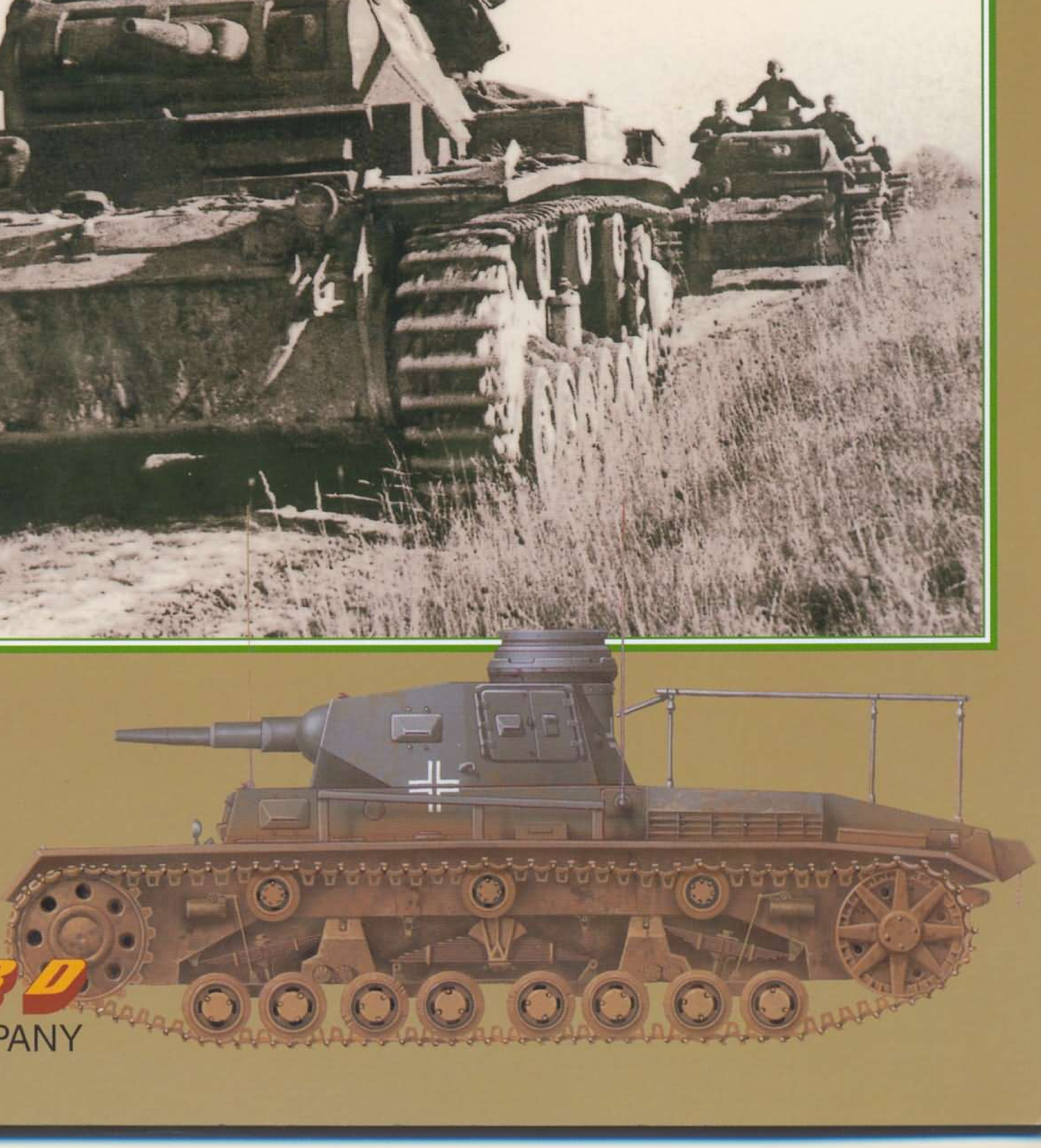
ARMOR AT WAR SERIES

7041

ACHTUNG PANZER

The German Invasion of France and the Low Countries

Jon Feenstra



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Introduction

With the defeat of Poland in September 1939, Hitler issued a directive on October 9 ordering preparations for an attack in the West. Fall Weiss (Case White), as the Polish invasion was called, had provided the Wehrmacht with much needed experience and the panzer units learnt many important lessons that would serve them well in the coming invasion of the West.

The German Plan

Within 10 days of Hitler's directive, the Army High Command (OKH) had devised the first version of the plan for the invasion of Northern France, Belgium and the Netherlands, given the name Fall Gelb (Case Yellow). This uninspired plan divided the armored units amongst various infantry corps and was a simple advance across the whole of Belgium and Holland, with the main aim of securing the Channel ports. Many believed that it could take months or even years to reach the coast and would not provide the quick and decisive victory the Führer demanded. Throughout the winter of 1939-40, numerous iterations of Fall Gelb were developed, and the plan was ordered into action by Hitler every time a new variation was presented. Thankfully for the Wehrmacht, many in the OKW (Wehrmacht High Command) realized the problems with this plan and used the weather as an excuse to postpone any invasion.

A minor occurrence on 10 January 1940 and subsequent cancellations due to weather gave the radical thinkers in the Wehrmacht the opportunity they needed to present their audacious new plan to the Führer. On this date a small plane carrying Luftwaffe Major Reinberger was forced down in Belgian territory due to bad weather and copies of Fall Gelb fell into Allied hands. Although not the only impetus for adopting a new plan, this event, coupled with the weather delays, resulted in General Erich von Manstein having a fortuitous meeting with Hitler in February in which von Manstein was able to explain his plan, which the OKH had failed to mention to the Führer. By this time Hitler was also beginning to realize that a new plan was needed that would not be anticipated by the Allies.

By February 24 a new plan had been instituted. Rather than a headlong thrust straight across Belgium, the majority of the divisions would advance through southern Belgium and into northern France, flanking the Allied forces and cutting them off from southern France and their supply lines. The southern boundary for Fall Gelb was to be the Somme and Aisne Rivers, which would provide a natural defensive barrier for the infantry units that would be tasked with holding off any French counterattacks while the Panzer units defeated the cut-off Allied units. The Wehrmacht's northern Army Group would invade Holland and northern Belgium, with its primary role being to deceive the Allies into believing that they were the main attack.

The German Forces

The OKW organized its Fall Gelb forces into three Heeresgruppe (Army Groups). Heeresgruppe C, with 17 divisions, none of them armored, was to play a secondary role until the latter half of Fall Rot (Case Red) and was tasked with defending the southern portion of the border along the Maginot Line from Luxemburg to Switzerland.

Heeresgruppe B, with 28 divisions including 3 armored, was the northern deception force. It was divided into two Armies, with the 18.Armee (including 9.Panzer-Division) responsible for the attack on Holland, and the 6.Armee (with 3. and 4.Panzer-Divisions) performing the actual deception role by attacking across the southern tip of Holland and into northern Belgium.

The majority of the divisions went to Heeresgruppe A, which would advance through the Ardennes region and sweep around the Allied forces. A total of 44 divisions, including 7 armored, were divided amongst three Armies, with the armored divisions further divided into Panzerkorps. XV.Panzerkorps, consisting of 5.Panzer-Division and General Erwin Rommel's 7.Panzer-Division, would form the northernmost group of the flanking maneuver. To the south would be Panzergruppe von Kleist, consisting of XLI.Panzerkorps (6. and 8.Panzer-Divisions) and XIX.Panzerkorps (1., 2. and 10.Panzer-Divisions). XIX.Panzerkorps, which included the elite Großdeutschland Motorized Regiment, was lead by General Heinz Guderian and would provide the main thrust of the flanking force.

On paper at least, the Allies had some significant advantages. While the number of divisions were equally matched, the Allies had about 3500 tanks and over 11,000 artillery pieces, compared to the Wehrmacht's 2400 and 7700 respectively. Furthermore, the French tanks were generally more heavily armored and many mounted modern anti-tank weapons. Two significant problems would lead to the inability of the French to match the German forces on the battlefield. First and foremost was the lack of radios in the majority of the French tanks, which limited the commanders' abilities to control their forces and adapt to the changing situation. More importantly was the outdated French training and doctrine that saw the majority of the tanks attached piecemeal to the infantry divisions instead of concentrating them into armored divisions much like to Wehrmacht. It was only in 1940 that three dedicated armored divisions were formed, but these had barely half the number of vehicles compared to their German counterparts.

Fall Gelb

Late in the evening of May 9, German units received the code word "Danzig", to indicate that the attack was to proceed. At 0430 hours on 10 May 1940, panzers began to pour across the borders and with that Fall Gelb had begun.

The Netherlands would be the first to fall, although the Dutch put up a stubborn fight. The OKW had recognized that the numerous waterways throughout the Dutch countryside would pose significant problems if bridges were not captured intact. To enable this to happen, a full-scale airborne invasion was used, with 3500 paratroopers from 7.Flieger-Division and 12,000 men airlifted in from 22.Infanterie-Division. As well, a special operations unit using the name Brandenburgers succeeded in infiltrating and capturing many key locations. While the Dutch managed to defend and demolish numerous crossings, many were captured intact and it was only a matter of holding onto these locations until the ground forces could link up with the airborne. This was 9.Panzer-Division's role and it took a mere two days before the first panzers successful relieved the isolated paratroops. The French attempted to intervene, but it was a case of "too little, too late". Although the Dutch put up a much greater fight than the Germans had anticipated, they were ill equipped to deal with the powerful German forces and capitulation occurred in only five days, on May 15.

6.Armee's attack was also preceded by a significant airborne operation. 3. and 4.Panzer-Divisions were to quickly advance across the small Dutch appendage and cross over the Maas River into Belgium at Maastricht but the prominent fortress of Eben Emael on the Albert Canal covered the approaches to the river as well as the main axis of advance. Eben Emael was assaulted by glider borne infantry and finally surrendered during the afternoon of May 11. In the meantime, the bridges at Maastricht had in fact been blown but by the early morning hours of May 11, pontoon bridges had been built and the panzers were crossing into Belgium.

The Allied response was predictable. With the Belgians realizing that neutrality was no longer an option, they formally requested help from the French and British two hours after Fall Gelb had begun. As expected, the Allies marched across the French-Belgian border to take up defensive positions along the Dyle River and beyond. The first major battle to take place and the largest tank action of the war up until that point occurred in the Gembloux-Hannut area, an area of large open country that was perfect for panzer operations. The French knew it to be a perfect avenue for attack and the Germans were eager to prove them right in their feint. From the May 12 to May 15 the Battle for Gembloux Gap raged between the 3. and 4.Panzer-Divisions and numerous French mechanized units. Both sides lost over 100 tanks and claimed victory. For the French, the battle provided the delay it needed so the 1er Armee could establish a solid defensive line, while for the Germans it distracted the Allies from the main thrust of Heeresgruppe A. With their task complete, 3. and 4.Panzer-Divisions were transferred to Heeresgruppe A (XV.Panzerkorps) on May 18, leaving the infantry divisions of 6.Armee to hold the line as 9 of the 10 panzer divisions committed to Fall Gelb flanked the Allies.

It has often been suggested that the French considered the terrain in the Ardennes Forest region to be impenetrable to armored forces and therefore spent little time organizing its defense. However this is little more than an excuse as the French did in fact become aware of its vulnerability during maneuver in 1938. The problem was neglected for far too long and efforts to strengthen the defenses came too late. Heeresgruppe A fully intended to exploit this weakness when the panzer divisions went into action at 5:30 am on May 10, quickly crossing the border into Luxembourg and Belgium.

Heeresgruppe A's assault was also preceded by a small scale airborne attack, in which 400 volunteers from Großdeutschland were flown two-by-two in 100 Fiesler "Storch" Fi-156 aircraft to secure key crossroads and tie down the few Belgian and French units in the area. Unfortunately navigational problems resulted in many being scattered and although some minor engagements were fought, the Allies were under orders to withdraw and the panzers advanced so quickly that the operation was unnecessary and soon forgotten.

The French leadership believed that it would take at least a week for the Germans to reach the first major obstacle, the Meuse River. How surprised they must have been when all of the panzer divisions reached the Meuse by May 12, with 5. and 7.Panzer-Divisions at Dinant, 6. and 8.Panzer-Divisions at Montherme and Guderian's units (1., 2., and 10.Panzer-Divisions) around Sedan. Unfortunately for the Germans, they failed to capture any bridges intact and with the French firmly entrenched on the far bank any crossing was going to be difficult. Not wanting to give the French any time to regain their composure, the Germans chose not to wait for any reinforcements or heavy artillery and began to immediately throw bridges across with each division's integral engineer units. Although many crossing attempts were stopped by intense fire, the first unit across was Rommel's 7.Panzer-Division, who succeeded in establishing a bridgehead during the night of May 12/13. This was soon followed by the 1. and 10.Panzer-Divisions. By the morning of May 14, panzers from 5 divisions were pouring across the river on two bridges in the Dinant area and three near Sedan. Meanwhile, in the center, XLI.Panzerkorps at Montherme met stubborn resistance and it was only with the help of the other two Panzerkorps relieving pressure from their flanks that they were able to cross the Meuse on May 15.

With the bridgehead firmly established, the Germans had essentially broken through the Allies' main line of resistance and Guderian immediately began his westward advance towards the Channel. At the same time, the infantry regiment from 10.Panzer-Division and the Großdeutschland Regiment were tasked with taking the Stonne heights overlooking the Sedan crossing to secure Guderian's flank. The town changed hands numerous times and these two units were relieved by the 2.Infanterie-Division, with the battle for Stonne continuing until May 24.

The advance continued until May 17, when Hitler ordered a halt to allow the infantry divisions to catch up and secure Guderian's flank along the Aisne River. The general was infuriated with the halt but, unbeknownst to the OKW, continued his advance using a reconnaissance in force, which did not technically disobey orders. All the units were on the move again on May 18 and the first units of 2.Panzer-Division reached the coast at Noyelles on May 20. The Allies attempted some resistance, and a few noteworthy armored counterattacks were made, but it was sporadic at best. By May 22 all of Panzergruppe von Kliest had reached the coast, although many of the port cities such as Boulogne and Calais would hold out for many more days.

While von Kliest drove for the coast with his five panzer divisions, the remaining four were tasked with securing the northern flank and sealing the ever-shrinking pocket. Once again the Allies put up sporadic resistance but could do little to stop the German advance. The only significant counterattack was against Rommel's 7.Panzer-Division at Arras on May 21, when an adhoc BEF (British Expeditionary Force) unit that included about 70 Matilda tanks (although only 16 were the heavily armored Mark IIs) succeeded in advancing about 10 miles and capturing about 400 prisoners. Unfortunately, the British were unable to hold the ground and were forced to abandon Arras two days later and continue the general retreat to the coast.

The British realized that little could be done to save Belgium (who would eventually surrender on May 28) and on May 23 it was decided to pull back to Dunkirk and attempt to evacuate. Fortunately for the BEF, the Germans made one of the few errors in their campaign that same day. Hitler, possibly worried by the Arras counterattack, ordered a halt as the panzer divisions were preparing to assault the Dunkirk perimeter and decided to leave Dunkirk to the Luftwaffe. This respite gave the British the opportunity to strengthen the perimeter and when Hitler rescinded the order on May 26, the BEF evacuation had already begun. Operation Dynamo would continue until June 4, when the German forces would finally take the beaches. The panzer divisions had already been withdrawn on May 29, to rest and refit in preparation for Fall Rot, the invasion of southern France.

Fall Rot

By the start of Fall Rot (Case Red) on June 5, 1940, the fate of France was a foregone conclusion. With only 60 divisions left to defend against 143 German divisions devoted to the offensive, it was only a matter of time. Heeresgruppe A and B were reorganized for Fall Rot and would once again form the main assault force, while Heeresgruppe C remained in its defensive positions to the east. From the Channel coast along the Somme River to the Laon area, Heeresgruppe B was the western arm of the attack force and consisted of 34 infantry and 6 panzer divisions. Heeresgruppe A was in positions generally along the Aisne from Laon to the Moselle Valley and included 40 infantry divisions and Panzergruppe Guderian (1., 2., 6., and 8.Panzer-Divisions).

The offensive opened with Heeresgruppe B crossing the Somme at Abbeville, Amiens and Peronne. These bridgeheads had been captured during Fall Gelb in anticipation of the coming offensive against southern France and despite fierce counterattacks by the French the bridges remained intact. The Allies basically threw everything they had at the Germans but by June 9 the Seine River had been reached. Once again, the Germans failed to capture any intact bridges and the advance was temporarily halted. 5. and 7.Panzer-Divisions turned north-west and headed for the coast to eliminate those forces trapped on the north side of Seine, with further evacuations taking place at the various coastal towns.

Heeregruppe A's assault across the Aisne began on June 9, with Guderian's panzers moving forward the next morning. By June 12, the Marne had been crossed and 5 days later, the Swiss border was reached, effectively surrounding the vaunted Maginot Line. At the same time, the Seine was crossed and the German panzer divisions fanned out across all of France mopping up the last resistance. Evacuations continued from many of the Channel ports, although on a much smaller scale than Dunkirk. The French government relocated to Bordeaux on June 10, and the open city of Paris was entered four days later on June 14, the same day that Heeresgruppe C was finally released from its defensive posture and began its assault on the Maginot fortifications. Rommel captured the major port of Cherbourg on the Cotentin Peninsula on June 19 but the French continued to hang on, finally accepting their defeat and formally surrendering on June 22. However, the official ceasefire did not take affect until June 25 after an armistice was also signed with the Italians, so sporadic fighting continued as the Germans occupied the remainder of the country.

With the dust settled, the equipment losses could be tallied. In total, the Panzer Divisions lost about 35 percent of their tanks, with the majority being the poorly armed and armored Panzer Is and IIs which made up over 50 percent of the total strength. These losses essentially confirmed what the Wehrmacht already knew, that these vehicles were inadequate as front-line tanks, although they would continue to be used until sufficient supplies of heavier models became available. With the Allies now fully expelled from mainland Europe, the preparations for an invasion in the East could finally begin.

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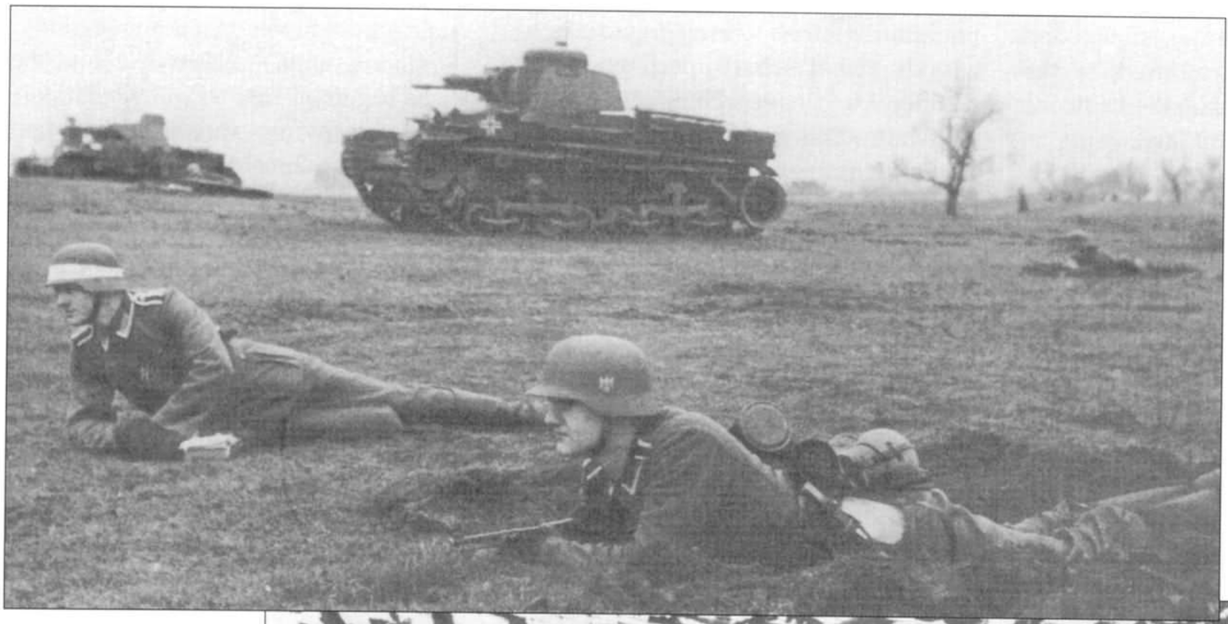
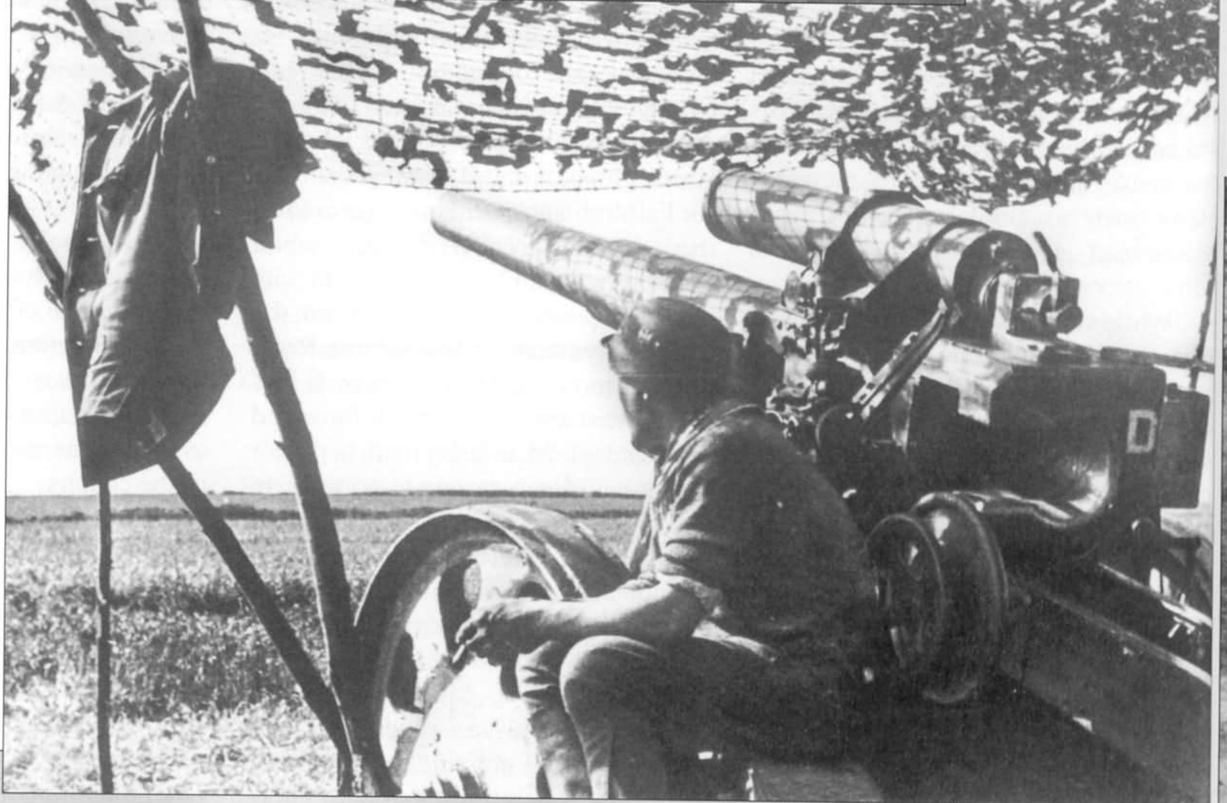
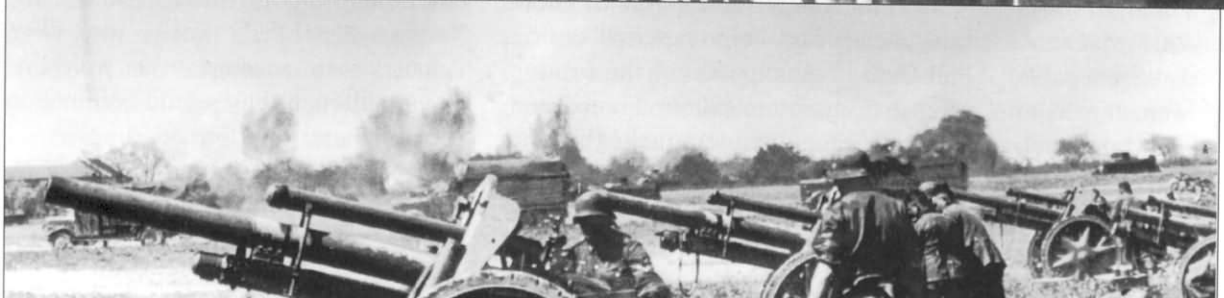


Elements of the 6.Panzer-Division on exercise in early 1940 prior to the attack in the West. The 6.Panzer-Division was the only Wehrmacht unit equipped with the Panzerkampfwagen 35(t), as seen in the foreground, for Fall Gelb and Fall Rot. Moving up in the background is a Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.B, C, or D. The soldier with the white helmet band is an exercise umpire.



15cm schwere Feldhaubitze 18 concealed underneath camouflage netting along the Belgian frontier on the morning of May 10. The steel wheels are indicative of a horse drawn infantry unit, and it is possibly from Artillerie-Regiment 28 of the 28.Infanterie-Division. The "D" on the breech indicates the 4th gun in the section.



A battery of 10.5cm leFH 18 field guns with their prime movers and ammunition trucks in the background. Each panzer division was authorized one artillery regiment with 3 battalions, two equipped with 10.5cm guns and the other with 15cm guns. A battalion had 3 batteries, each with four guns as seen here. The third leFH 18 appears to have just fired, as the barrel is in full recoil.

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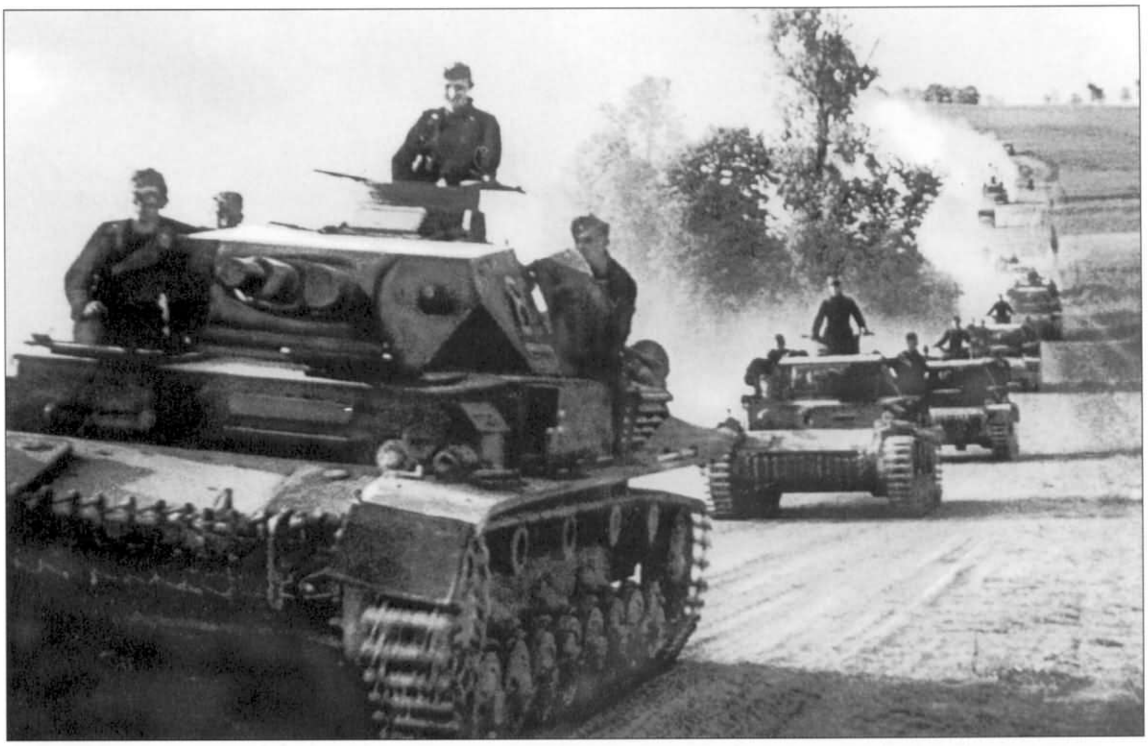
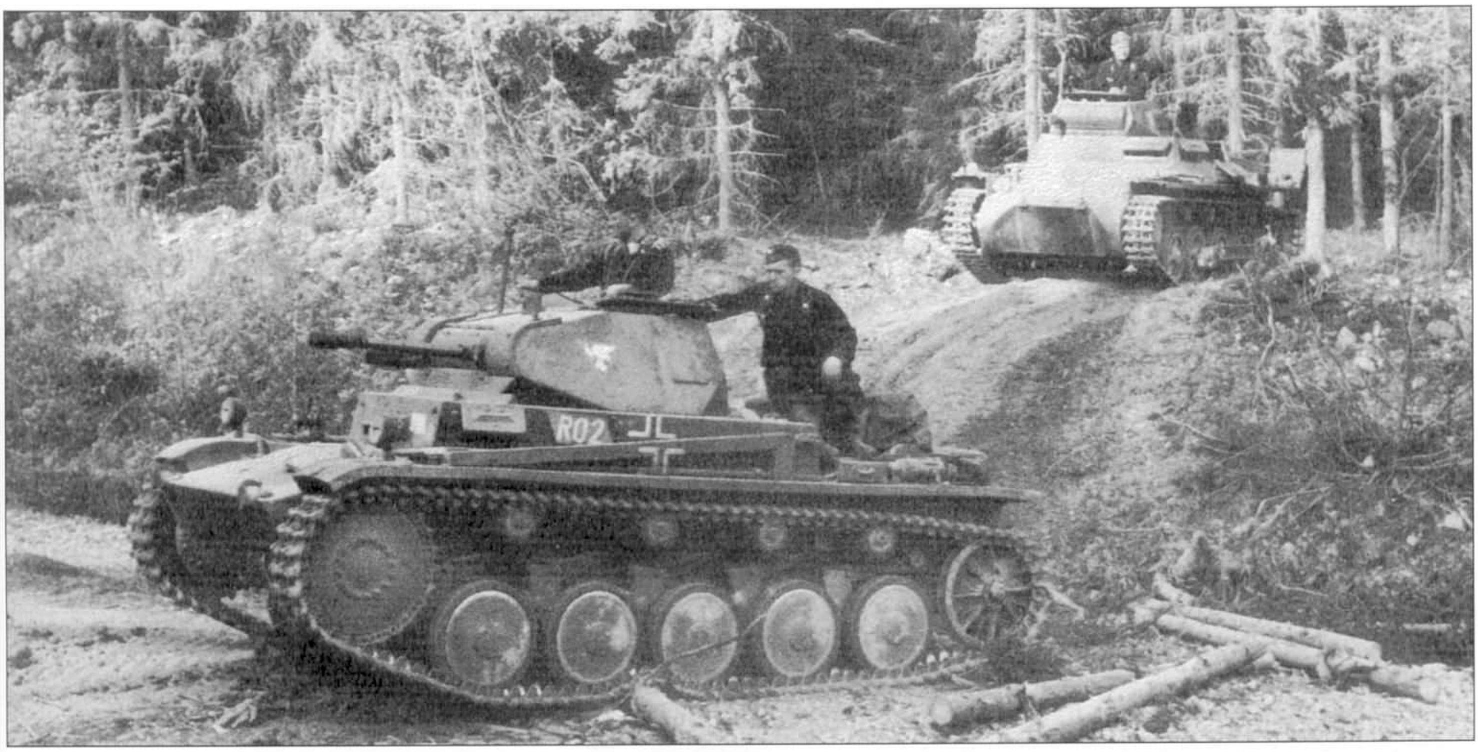
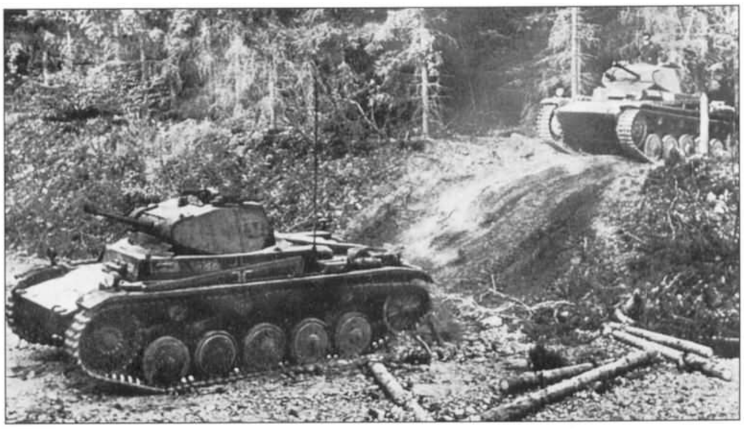
An immense cloud of dust is kicked up by a 1.Panzer-Division column lead by five Pz.Kpfw.IVs. The first is an Ausf.B or C followed by an Ausf.D. The first numeral of the turret number is visible that signifies the 8.Kompanie while the underline was to denote Pz.Rgt.2. All the crewmembers are riding exposed on most of the tanks with the exception of the drivers, and the nearest vehicle has the ventilation hatch in front of the cupola open, a seldom seen item that was a feature of the early Panzer IVs.

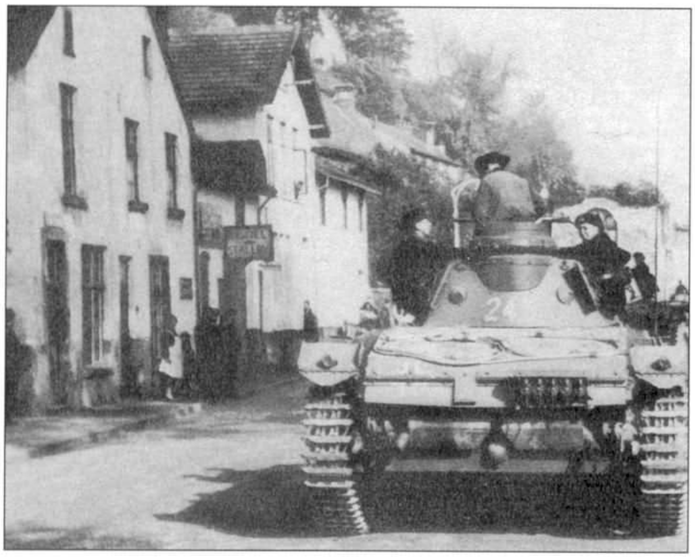




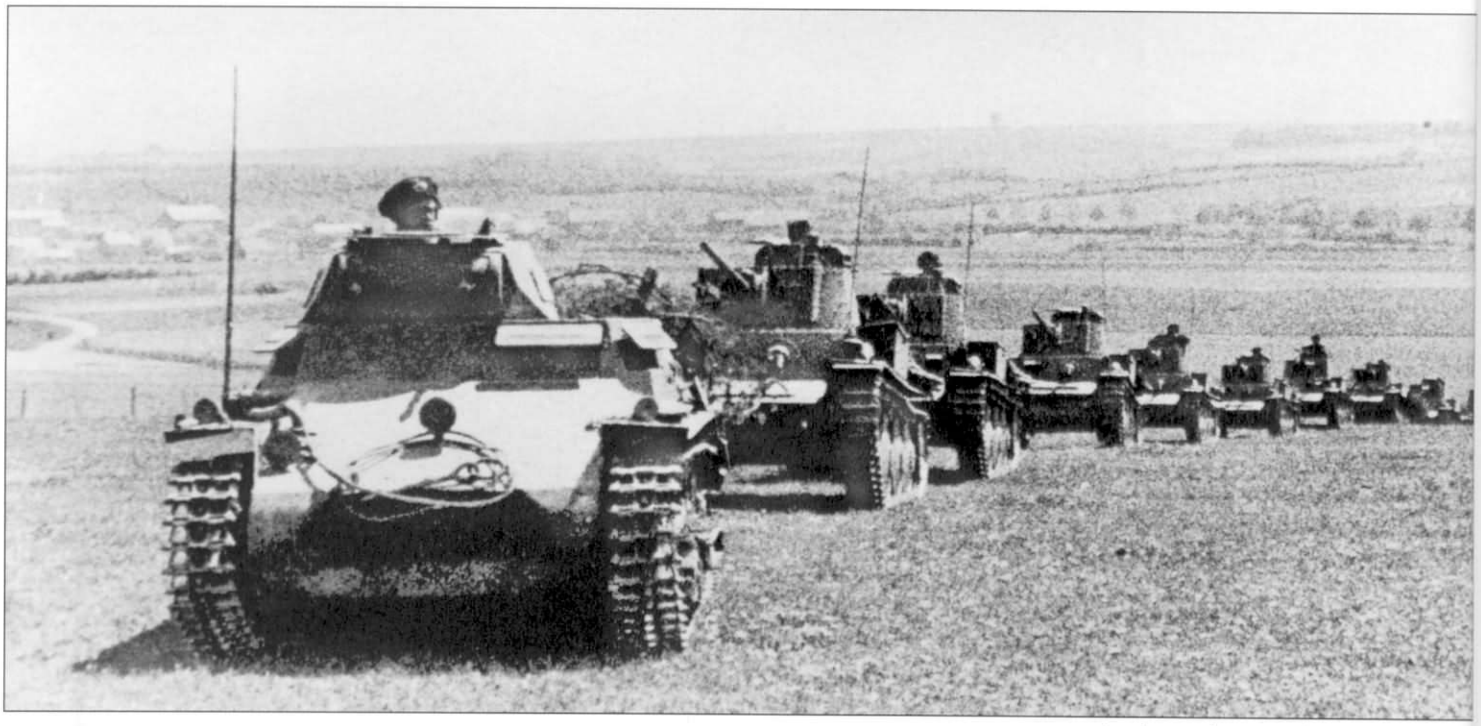


These two photos, although seldom published together, clearly depict the Pz.Rgt.3 or 4 command group of the 2.Panzer-Division moving through the Ardennes in Luxemburg or Belgium late in the day on May 10. In the first photo, the executive officer's Pz.kpfw.II leads a Pz.kpfw.I Ausf.B. The vehicle displays a unique personal emblem on the turret side, a white eagle painted on a dark colored triangle. The divisional insignia of two yellow dots appears between the cross, which has an unusual black outline, and the rhomboid plate. The glacis plate has a white rhomboid with an "R" beside it and the divisional sign is repeated below it. A color plate and different photograph of this tank appears in Concord #7033 "Panzer–Division 1935-1945 Volume (1) The Early Years 1935-1941".

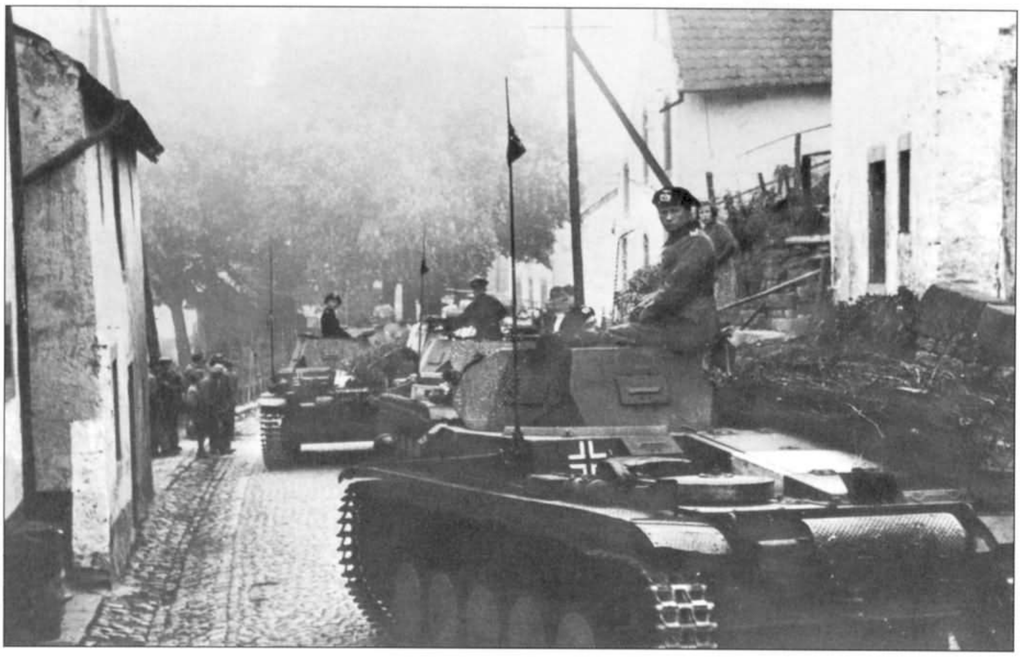
In the second photo a Panzer II with "RN2" in white on its rhomboid plate leads "R01", the regimental commander's Panzer II. RN2 is presumably a vehicle from the regimental signals platoon. Both tanks carry identical markings to those seen on "R02" in the previous photograph, with the exception of the turret emblem.



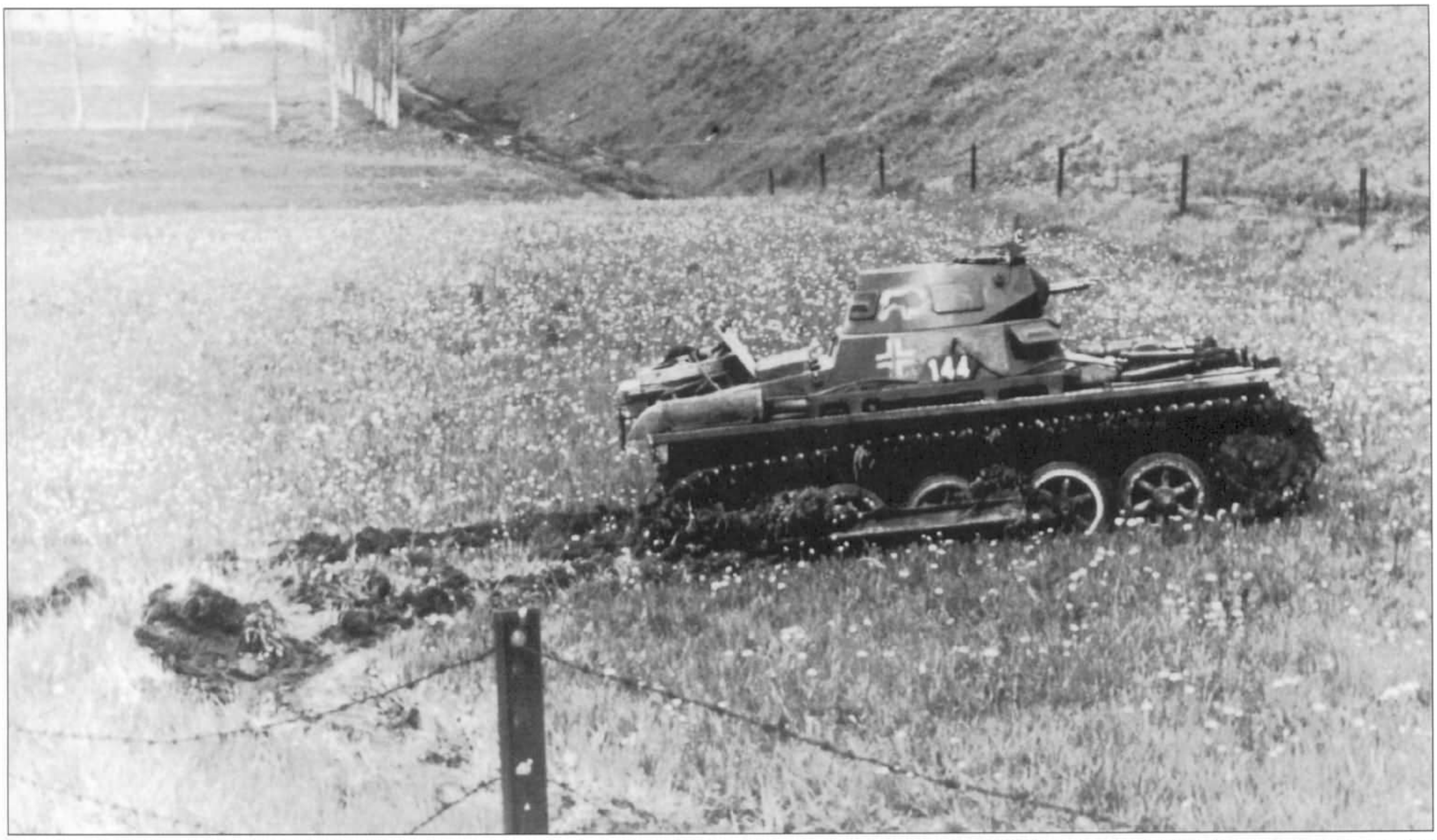
As part of the invasion plan, 6.Armee was tasked with a deception role. Its two divisions, 3. and 4.Panzer-Division, were to convince the Allied forces that their thrust through Holland and into Belgium was the main one while the real effort was made by Heeresgruppe A. This Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.E or F is seen on the morning of May 10 passing through Valkenburg, roughly in the center of the narrow strip of Dutch land that separates Germany from Belgium and about 10km from Maastricht and its crucial bridges over the Meuse. Although no insignia is visible this vehicle is probably from 4.Panzer-Division and displays tactical number 245 in yellow. It is unclear in the original print if a Pz.Rgt.36 dot is also present.



A column of panzers from the 7.Panzer-Division advance across Belgium on May 10, forming the left flank of XV.Armeekorp's drive to the Meuse River. In the lead is a Pz.Kpfw.I followed by Pz.Kpfw.38(t)s. The 7.Panzer-Division was the only division to have both types of panzers on strength at the start of Fall Gelb, with 34 PzI and 91 Pz38(t).

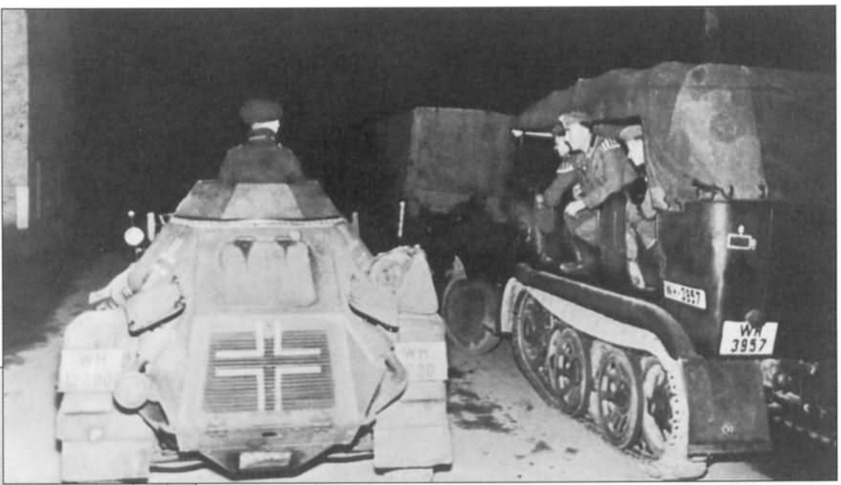


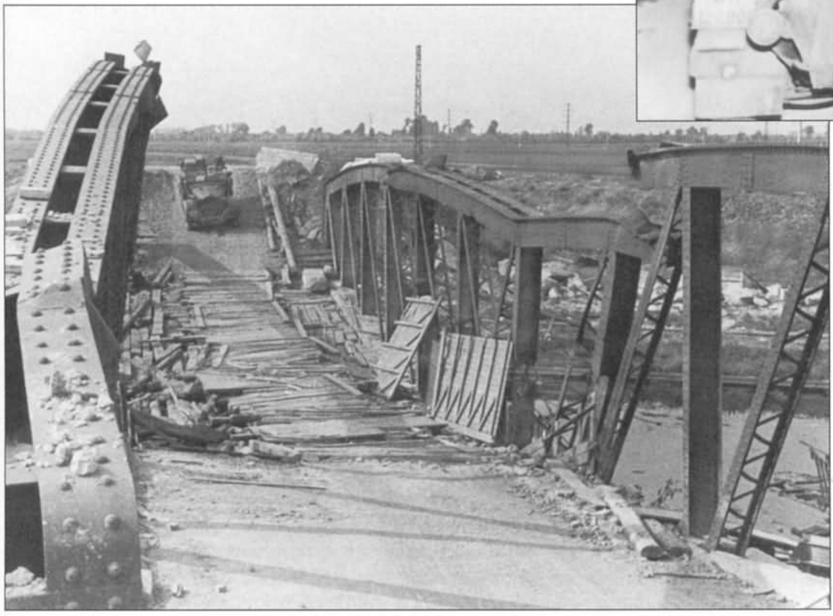
Panzerkampfwagen II from 10.Panzer-Division advance through a Belgian town on the first day of the attack after swiftly driving through Luxemburg. The 10.Panzer Division formed the southernmost flank of the XIX.Armeekorps, part of Pz.Gruppe von Kleist. Barely visible above the rear turret vision flap of both vehicles is the Bison emblem of Pz.Rgt.7. It appears that censors have obliterated the vehicle numbers on the turret side and rhomboid plate above the muffler. A white air recognition rectangle is prominently displayed on the engine deck and a couple of the tanks are flying unidentified banners from their antennae.



This Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.A from Pz.Rgt.7, 10.Panzer-Division is in a field near Arlon on the opening day of Fall Gelb, May 10. Arlon was just across the Belgium-Luxembourg border and 10.Panzer-Division encountered its first serious opposition here, the French 2eme D.L.C. (a cavalry unit), and forced them back to the Semois River. The blue-gray outlined bison is clearly visible here, as are the other markings. It appears that one of the engine access hatches is open, probably for cooling, and some unidentified stowage is carried on the engine deck, possibly a spare idler wheel.

During the early morning hours of May 10, 1940, soldiers from an engineer unit confer with a crewmember of an Sd.Kfz.221 armored car. Visible on the left side is a tactical sign for an Aufklarüng Abteilung (recon battalion). The halftrack is the early version of the 5-ton Sd.Kfz.6 with the engineer body that had an additional row of seats. Appropriately, a tactical sign for an engineer company appears on the rear plate with a small "8" or "B" platoon marking. License plates were commonly seen painted on the rear side of these halftracks in the early years of the war. It is interesting to note the tonal difference between these two dark gray vehicles, most likely the result of the cameraman's flash and the armored car being covered with a layer of dust.



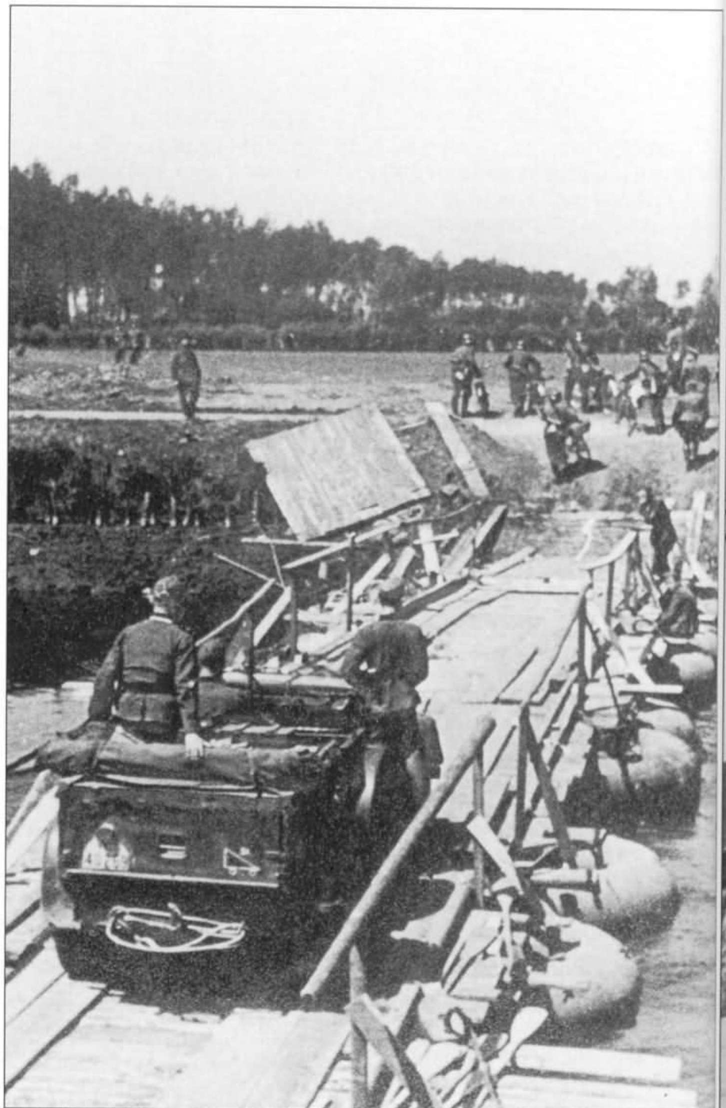


A Kfz.15 medium passenger car approaching a bridge in the Maastricht area, which has sustained considerable damage. This vehicle is part of Hoepner's XVI.Panzerkorps and the photograph was taken during the first day of the invasion. A large unidentified marking appears on the right fender.

A Mercedes-Benz Type 230 convertible follows an unidentified motorcycle across the Dutch border on the morning of May 10. Both vehicles display the tactical sign for a motorized anti-tank gun unit. Only five battalions of border troops defended the small patch of the Netherlands between Belgium and Germany that was crossed by the XVI.Armeekorps and they offered little resistance. Despite this, Hoepner's forces still failed to capture the road bridge at Maastricht intact.

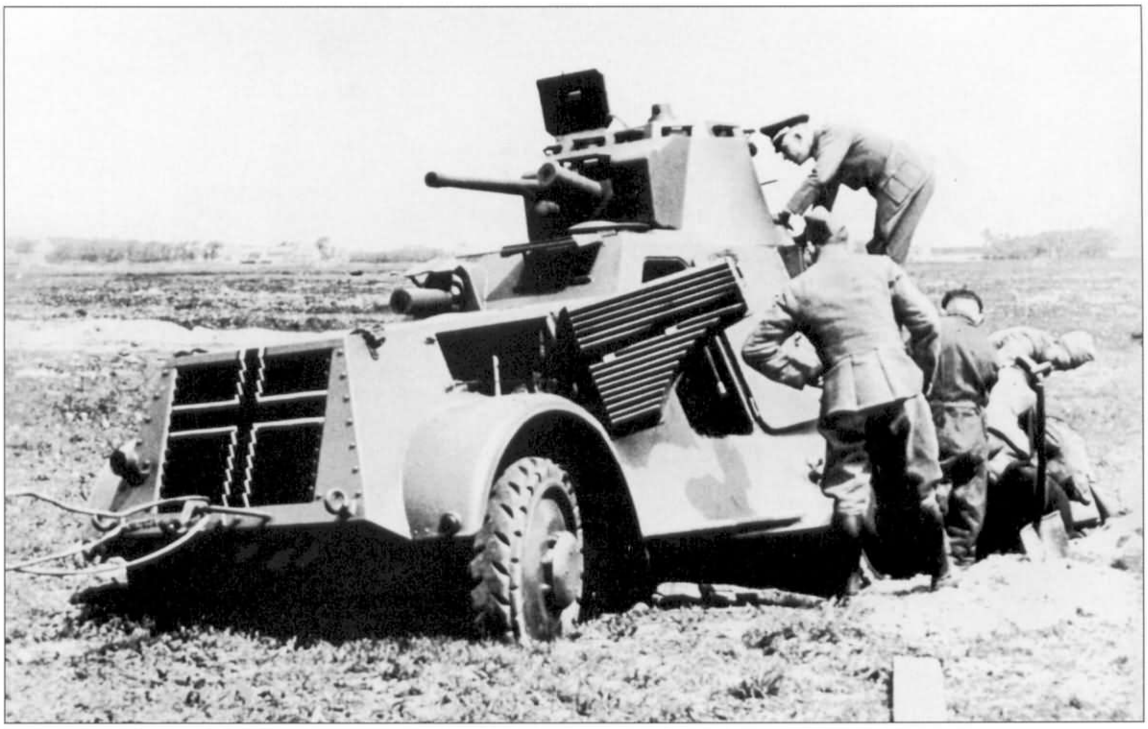
German infantry attached to 4.Panzer-Division take a much-needed respite early in the campaign. Having already crossed the Meuse and Albert Canal, Hoepner's XVI.Panzerkorps bypassed the Leige fortress and aimed for the Gembloux gap. Further up the road an Sd.Kfz.221 has also stopped and its crew dismounted. Two infantrymen in the foreground carry the Torn.Fu.d 2 radio set consisting of the transceiver and battery case, while another in the background carries an MG34 tripod.

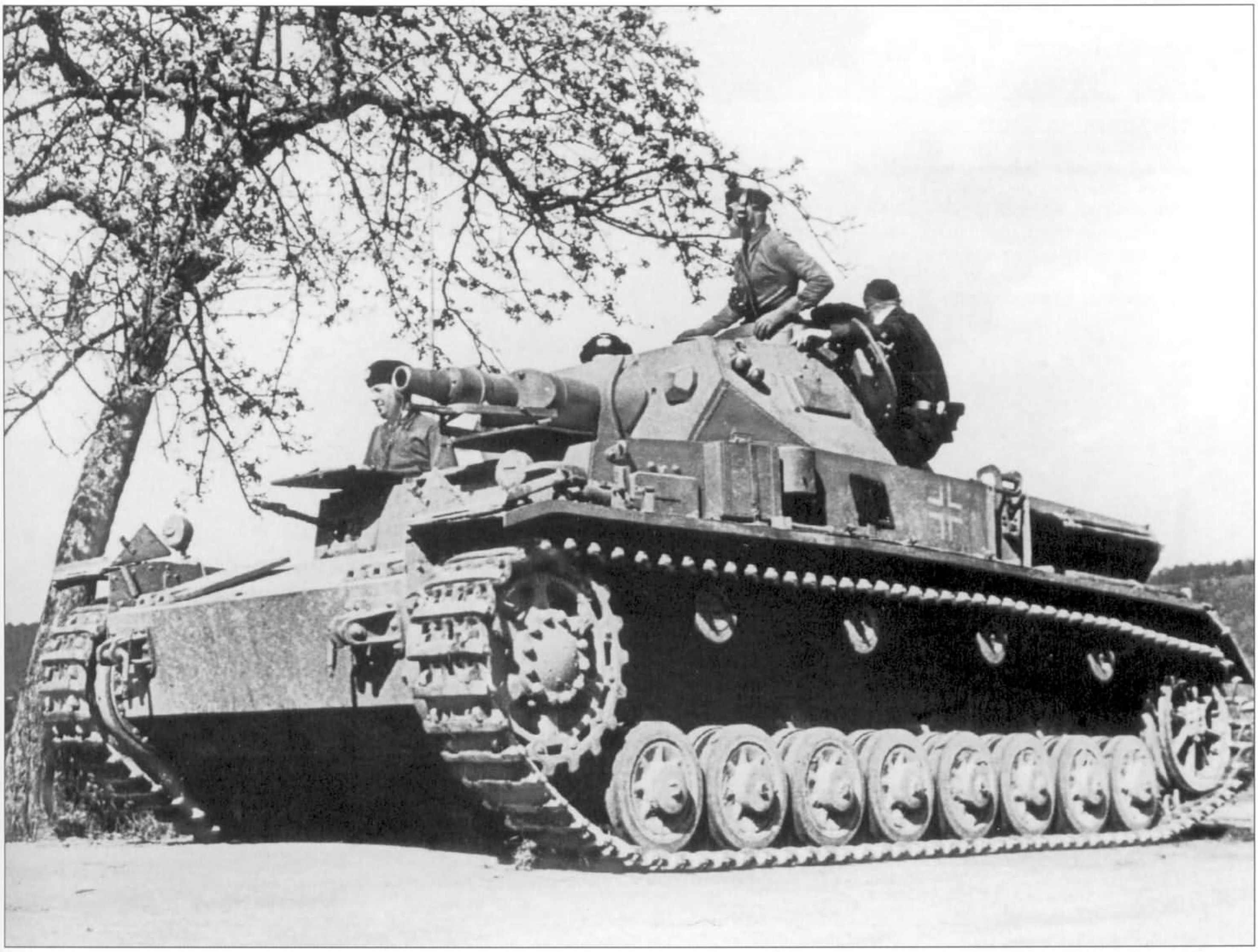
This Panzerbefehlswagen III Ausf.E of 1.Panzer-Division slid into a shell crater in the Belgian town of Bertrix on May 11. Although very little is visible in this photo, a picture from the other side confirms that it is a Pz.Bef.Wg.III with a tactical marking "II01" in white on the turret sides and rear so it was probably the 2nd Abteilung (battalion) commander's personal vehicle. The number is underlined to indicate Pz.Rgt.2. It also carried a unique solid white cross on the turret roof as well as the standard white rectangle on the engine deck for aerial recognition.



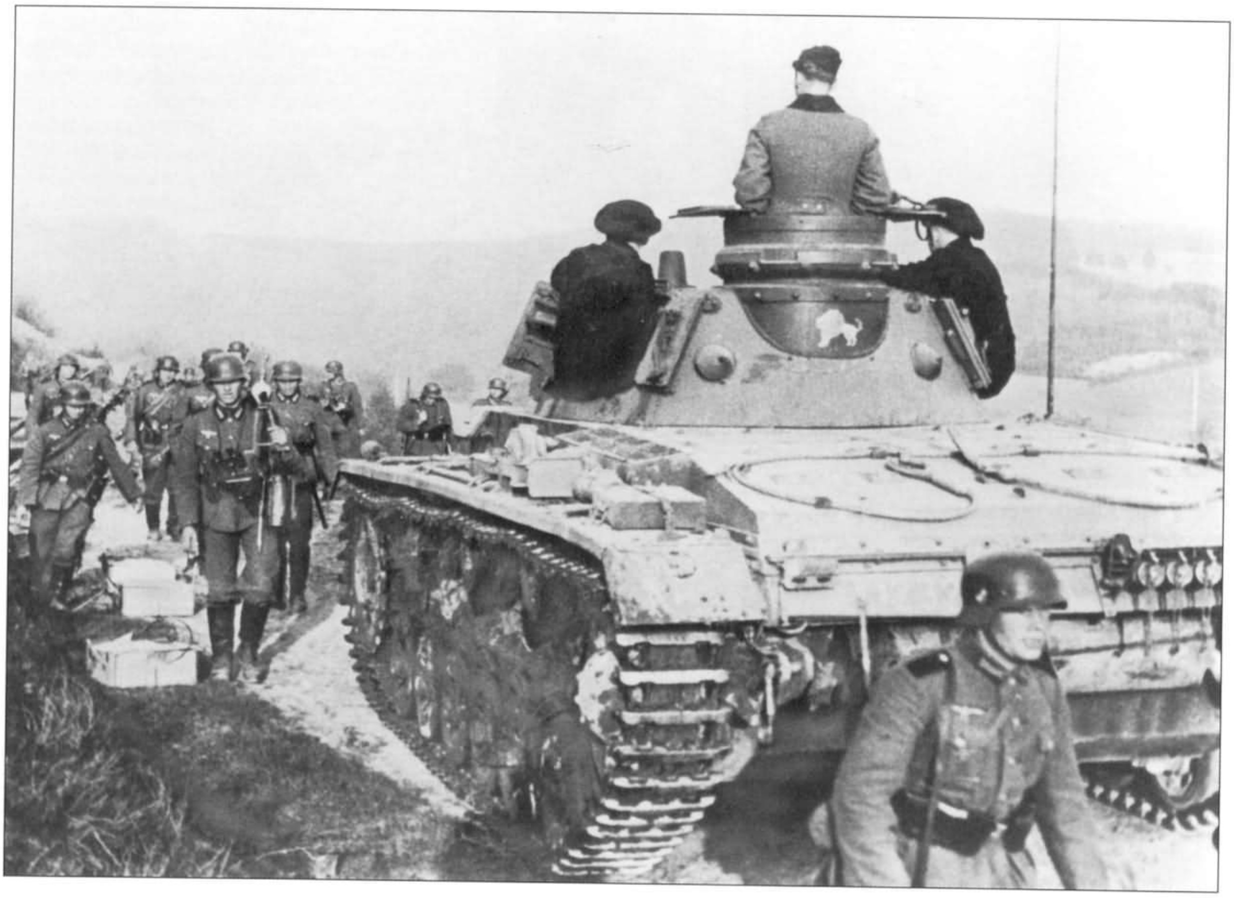
A Kfz.15 medium cross-country car crosses a pontoon bridge which has obviously been constructed for the use of light vehicles only. The photo was taken in the Montherme area after Rienhardt's XLI.Panzerkorps had already advanced through. A tactical sign for the headquarters of a towed anti-tank gun unit appears on the right rear corner of the car.

The Dutch army was ill prepared for modern warfare and possessed no tanks in May 1940. Its only armored vehicles were twelve each of the Swedish Landsverk Type L 180 and L 181 armored cars, called Pantserwagen M 36 and M 38 respectively. An additional 12 Pantserwagen M 39, a much more advanced armored car, were delivered in May 1940 but only a few saw action due to a shortage of main armament. The M 38 shown here has obviously been used by the Germans given the large cross on the front so it is quite possible that the photograph was taken after Fall Gelb and Fall Rot, perhaps even in Russia. After the Dutch capitulation, the Wehrmacht put many of these vehicles into use, particularly with police units.

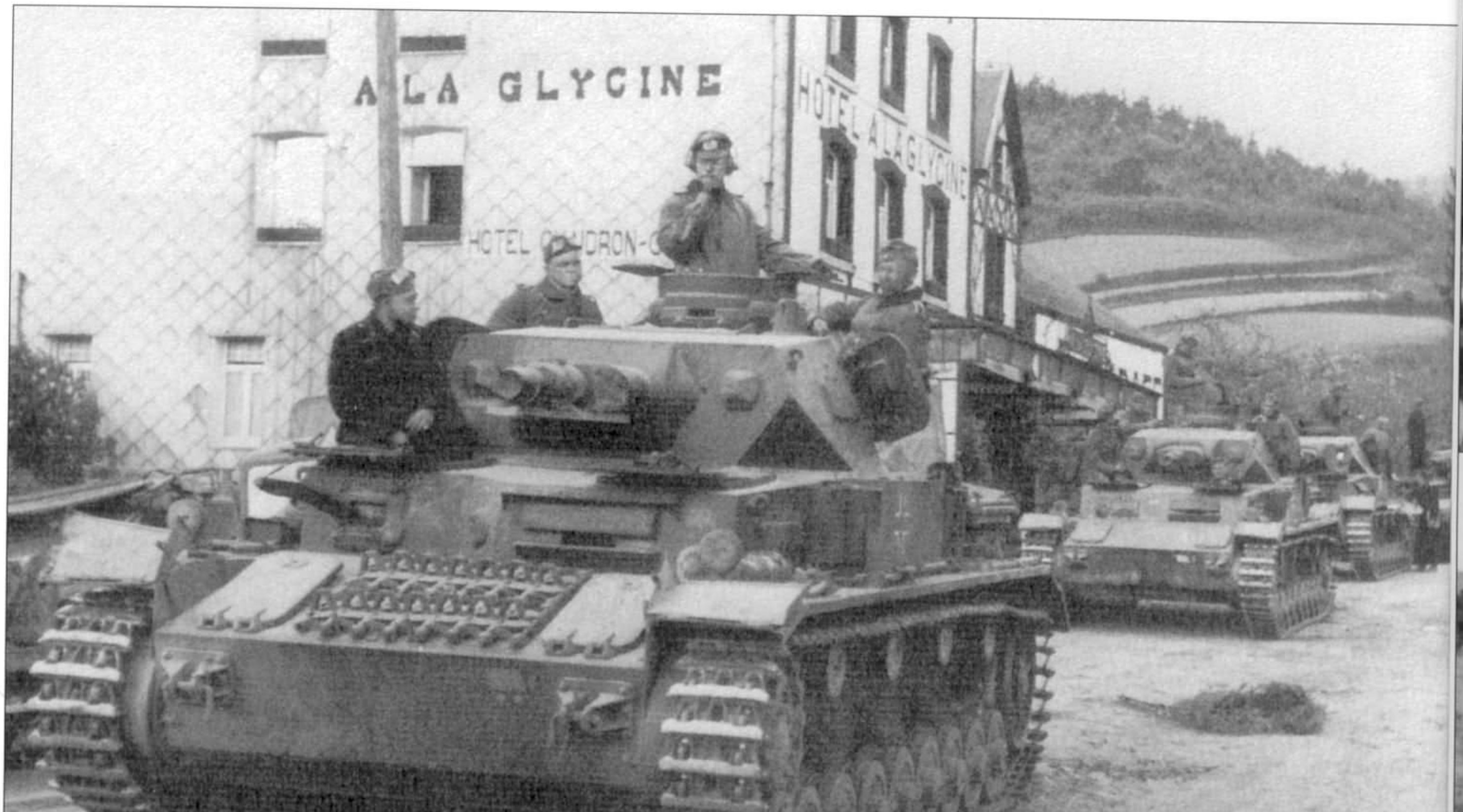




A Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.D near the Maas River in Holland. Although the divisional insignia of two yellow "X"s is not visible, this vehicle is from 9.Panzer-Division, which was the only unit equipped with these tanks for the sweep through Holland. After the initial invasion by airborne troops, 9.Panzer-Division performed a crucial role in linking up with the assault troops at the Moerdijk bridgehead. Not surprisingly, the 9th suffered very few losses as the Dutch government capitulated within 5 days.

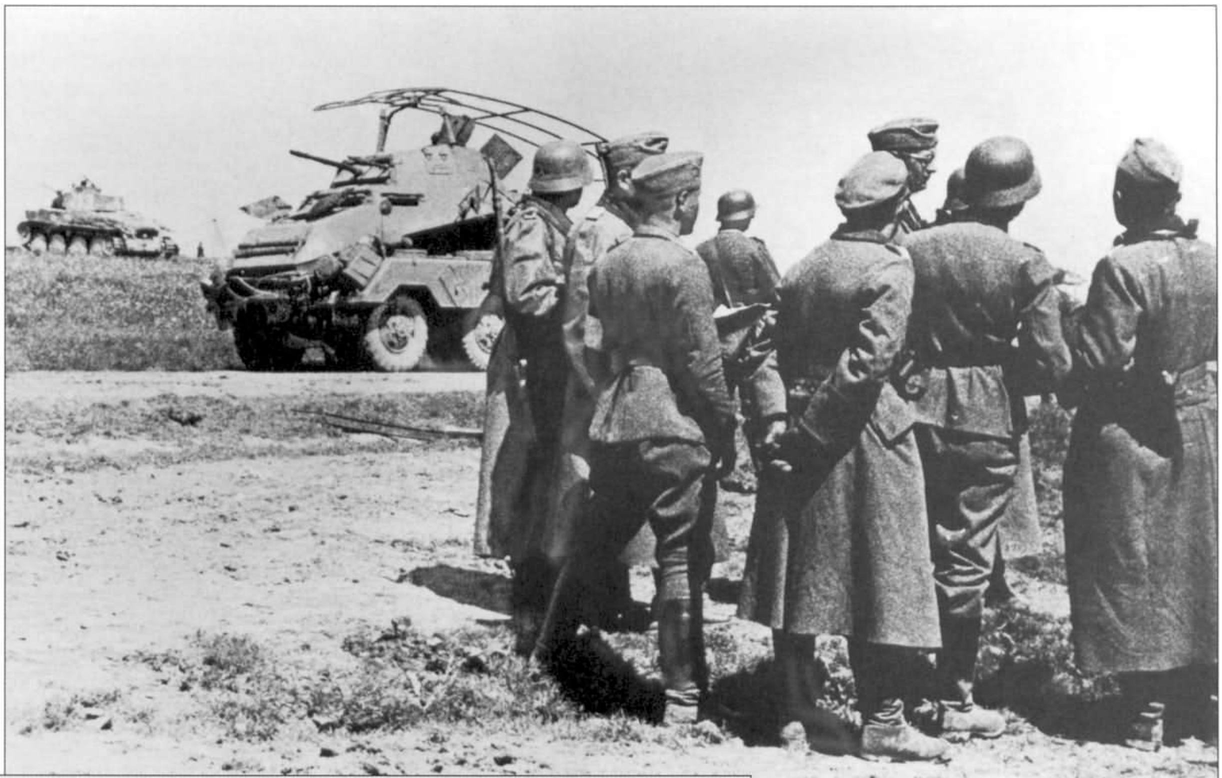


A Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.E or F halts on a dirt road in the Ardennes on May 12 to allow an infantry section to pass. The detailed lion marking on the cupola bulge is unidentified and appeared on at least one other Panzer III. Just visible on the rear plate beside the helmet of the Schütze (private) in the foreground is the tactical number 232 in yellow alongside a national cross. The convoy light is a field modification as it was not introduced as standard equipment until the Ausf.G and then it was mounted on the left fender in place of the taillight.

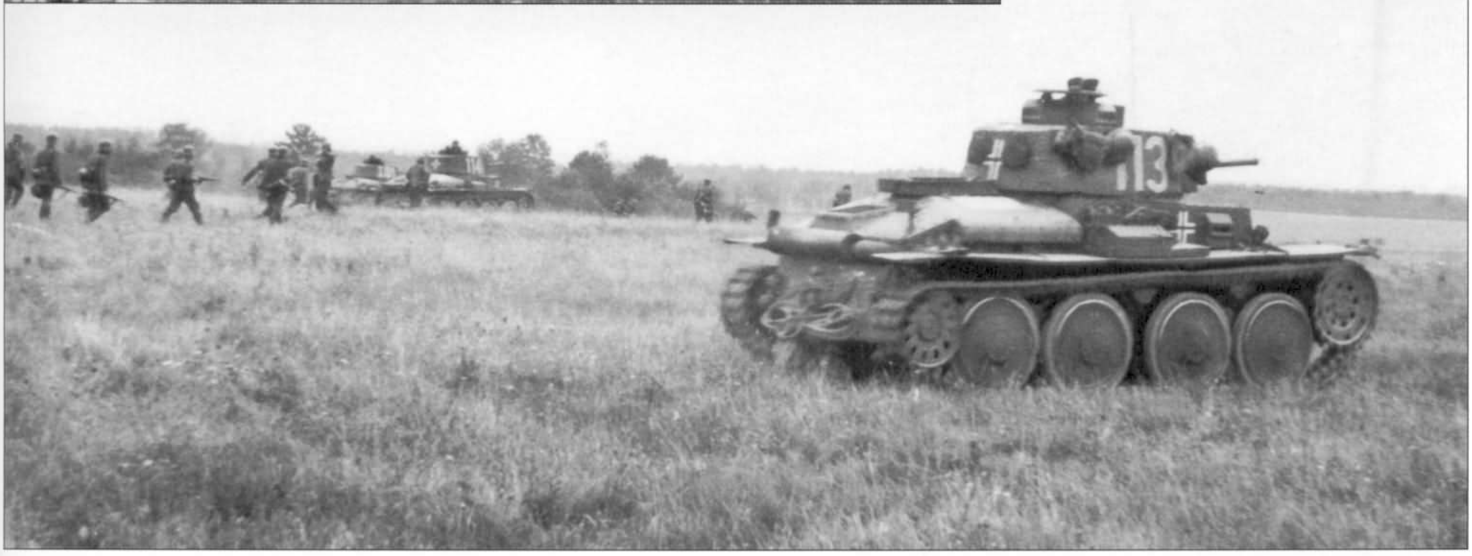


Travelling through the Belgian town of Vresse on May 12, a column of Pz.Kpfw.IV approach their crossing location over the Semois River. The Semois was the first major river obstacle that Pz.Gruppe von Kleist had to cross. The lead vehicle is an Ausf.D, while those following are either Ausf.B or C. The 2.Panzer-Division emblem of 2 yellow dots appears below a yellow rhomboid both on the lower hull plate and beside the driver's visor. A small "5" next to the lower one signifies the 5th company. The following vehicle displays similar markings but the divisional sign has been moved to a centralized location on the upper superstructure plate.

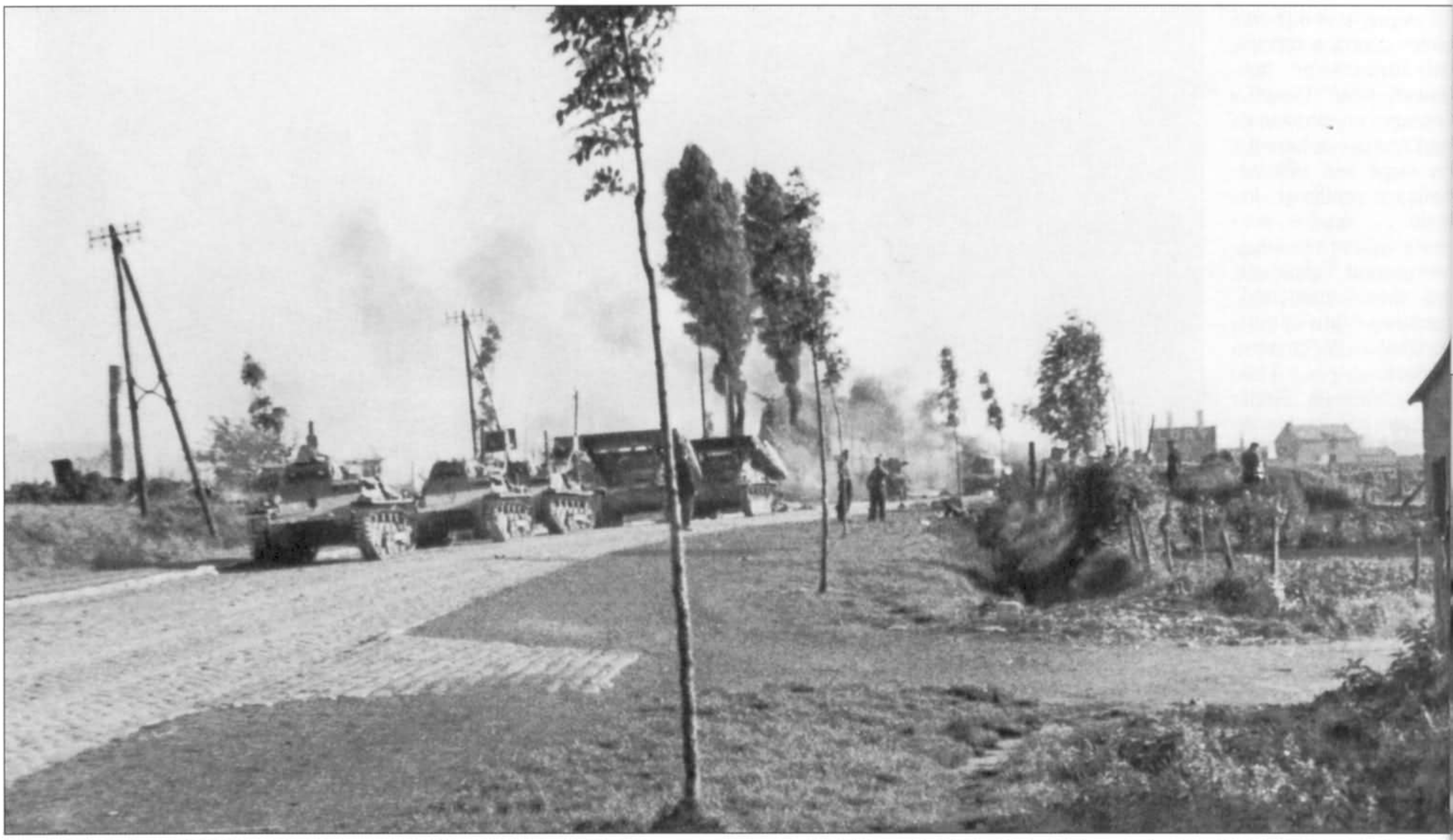
A group of officers confer during a halt in the advance on the Meuse near Dinant. Although no divisional markings are apparent, the large red tactical numbers outlined in white on the Pz.Kpfw.38(t) in the background indicate that these men and machines are from Rommel's 7.Panzer-Division. The Sd.Kfz.232 (8 Rad) armored car carries a tactical sign on the front corner of the hull, most likely that of a recon company.



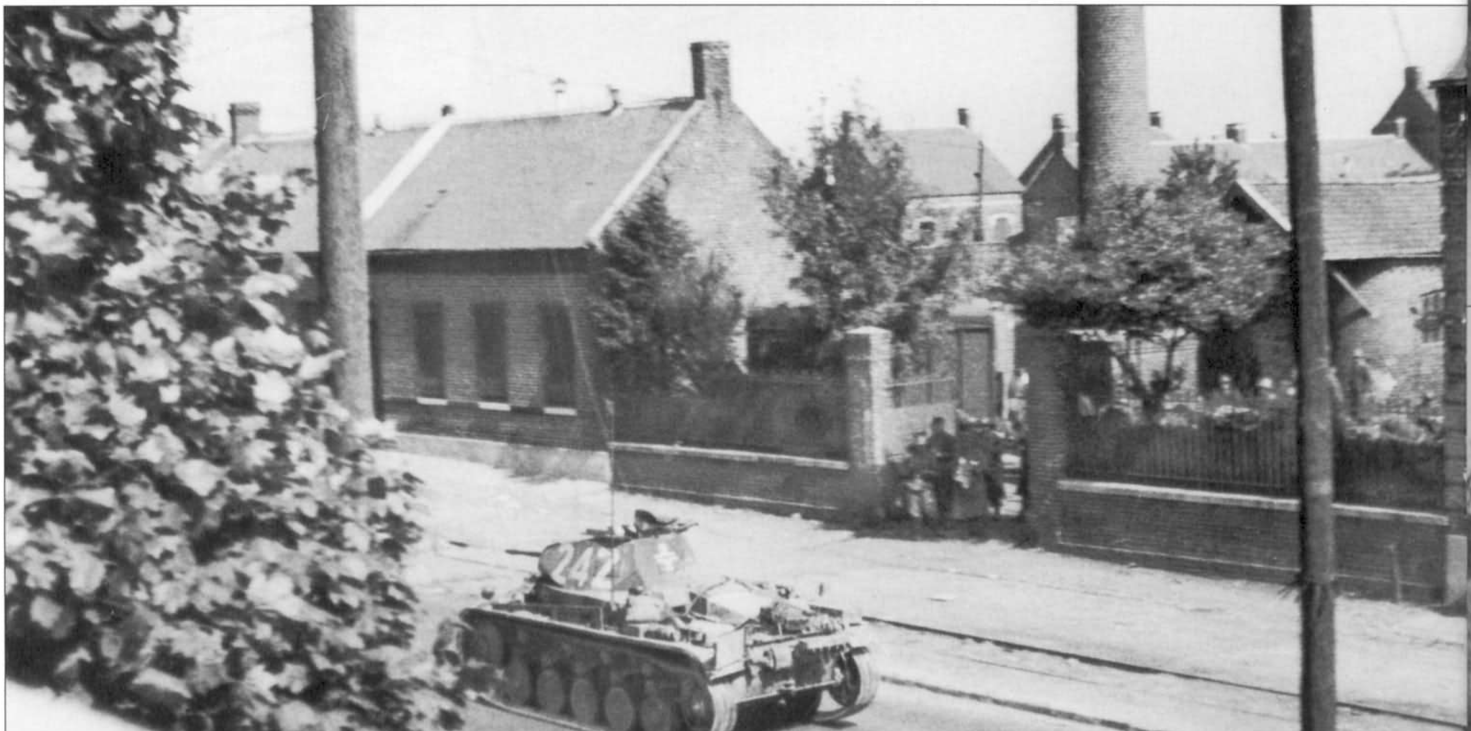
Blitzkrieg at its finest. A group of panzers advance across an open field, with a Pz.Kpfw.38(t) just coming into view on the left, and Pz.Kpfw.IIs and IVs in the background. Only 2 divisions were equipped with Panzer 38(t)s for Fall Gelb and Fall Rot, the 7th and 8th. With the large red and white turret numbers seen on the nearest Panzer II, this is invariable 7.Panzer-Division once again. Photographs of 8.Panzer-Division are relatively rare, both from 1940 and the rest of the war.



Pz.Kpfw.38(t)s from 7.Panzer-Division advance across a field with infantry support. In the far background can be seen tank "I01", the commander's vehicle from the 1st Abteilung (battalion) of Pz.Rgt.25. The two others, "113" and "114", are from the 1st platoon of the 1st company. The roadwheel rims have been worn to a bright bare metal finish due to rubbing the track guide teeth.



Each panzer-division's third company of its pioneer battalion was to be equipped with four Pz.Kpfw.IV bridgelayers for Fall Gelb. Due to shortages o equipment only half received the allotted numbers and the rest of the battalions were left to deal with the situation on their own. As shown here, Pionier Bataillon 58 from 7.Panzer-Division equipped at least 2 standard Pz.Kpfw.II with bridges, although it is unclear if these were simply carried on blocks or if a actual launching mechanism was built. Leading the bridgelayers are three Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.B.



A Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf.A-C moves quickly down a French street in a town that appears untouched by the effects of war. From the style and color of the turre numbers, this vehicle is probably from 7.Panzer-Division as this was one of the only units to display this style. A prominent black and white cross is on th turret rear. Note that the crew has been careful to leave the white aerial recognition rectangle on the engine deck unobstructed.

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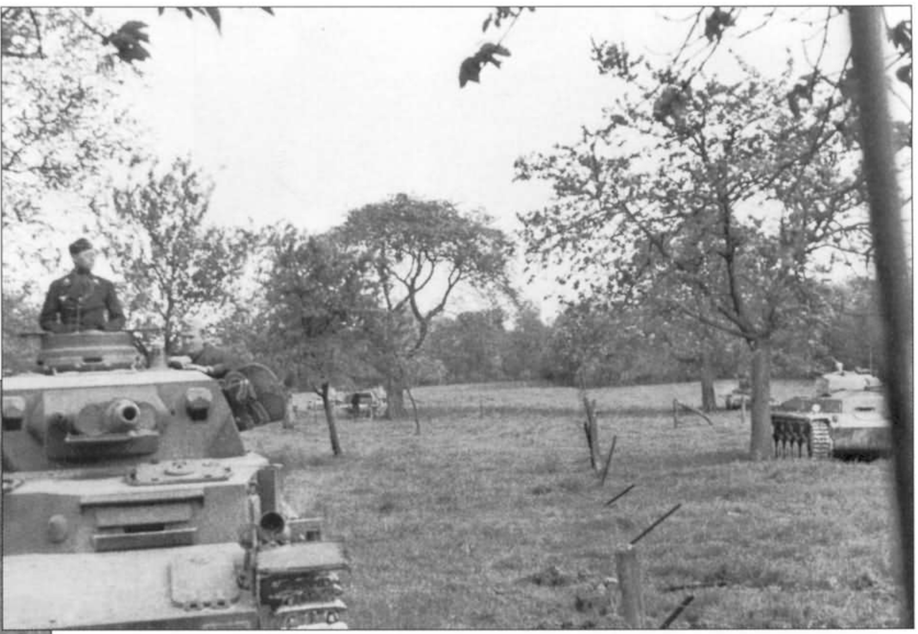
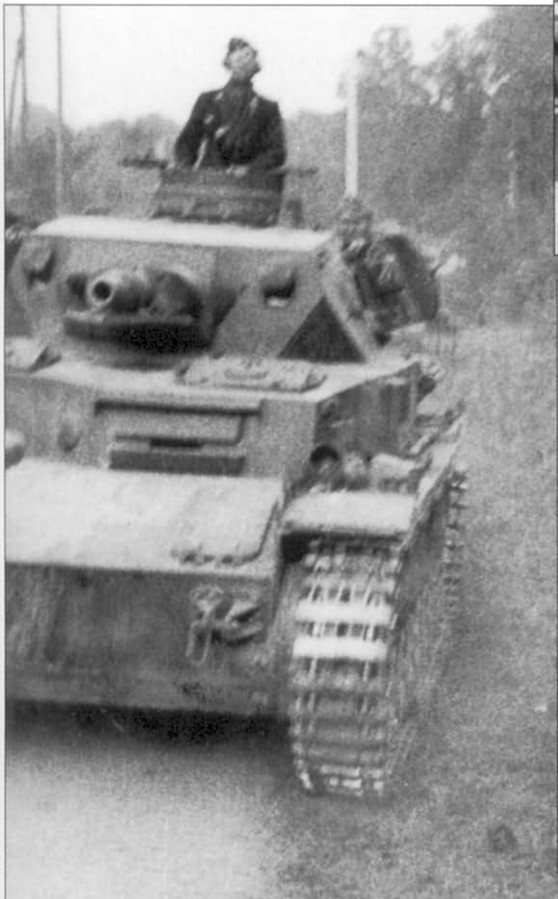
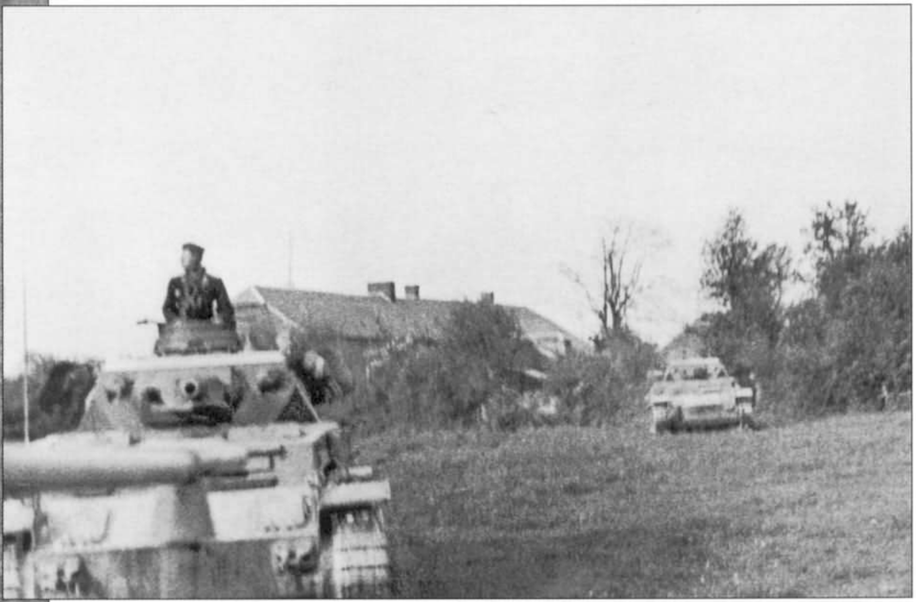
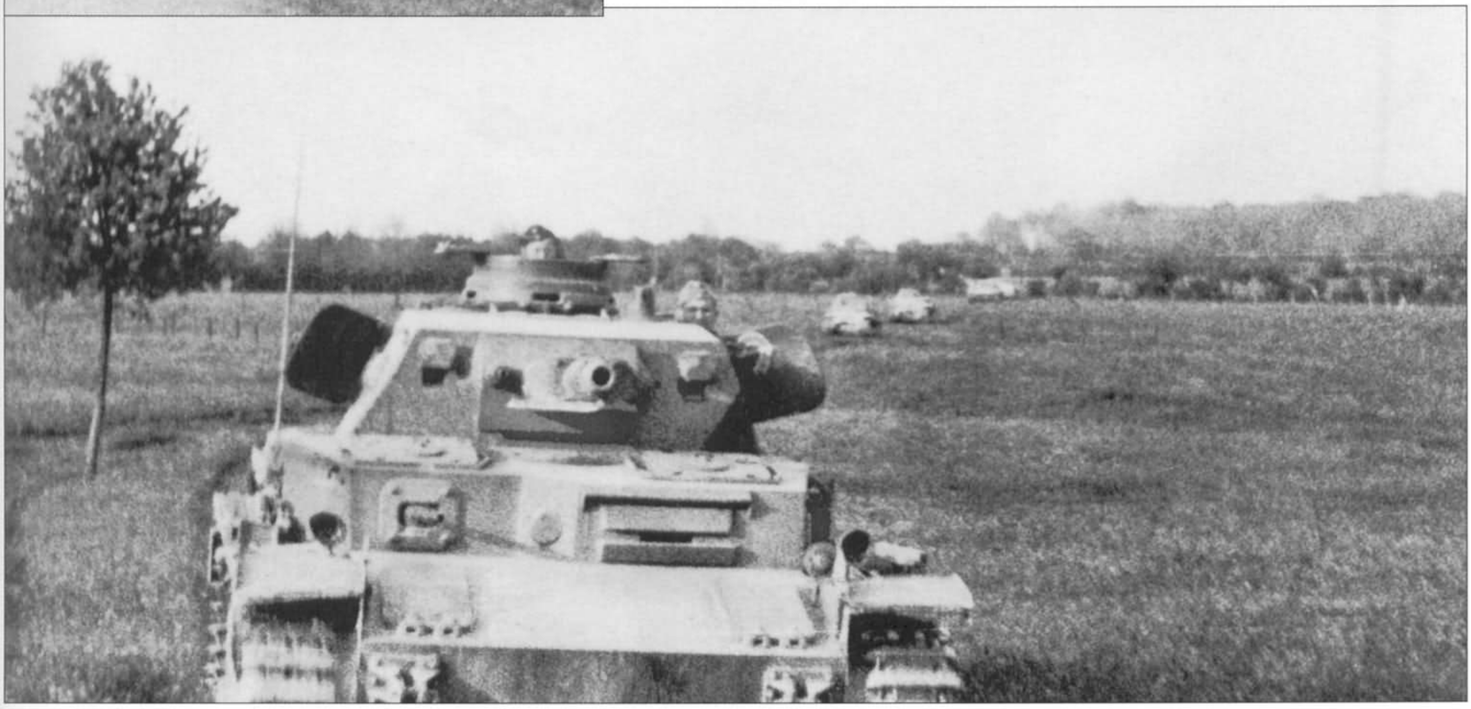
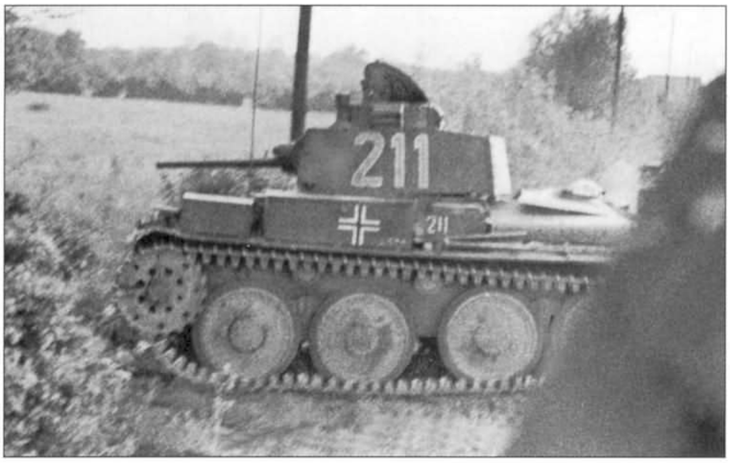
A unique set of four photographs taken roughly in sequence of a Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.D from 7.Panzer-Division. The familiar red with thin white outline tactical numbers are apparent from the open turret doors, of which a "3" is visible. In the background can be seen additional Pz.Kpfw.IV, as well as Panzer IIs and 38(t)s. Notice that the turret crewman wears a field gray version of the Feldmutze (sidecap), while the commander's is black.



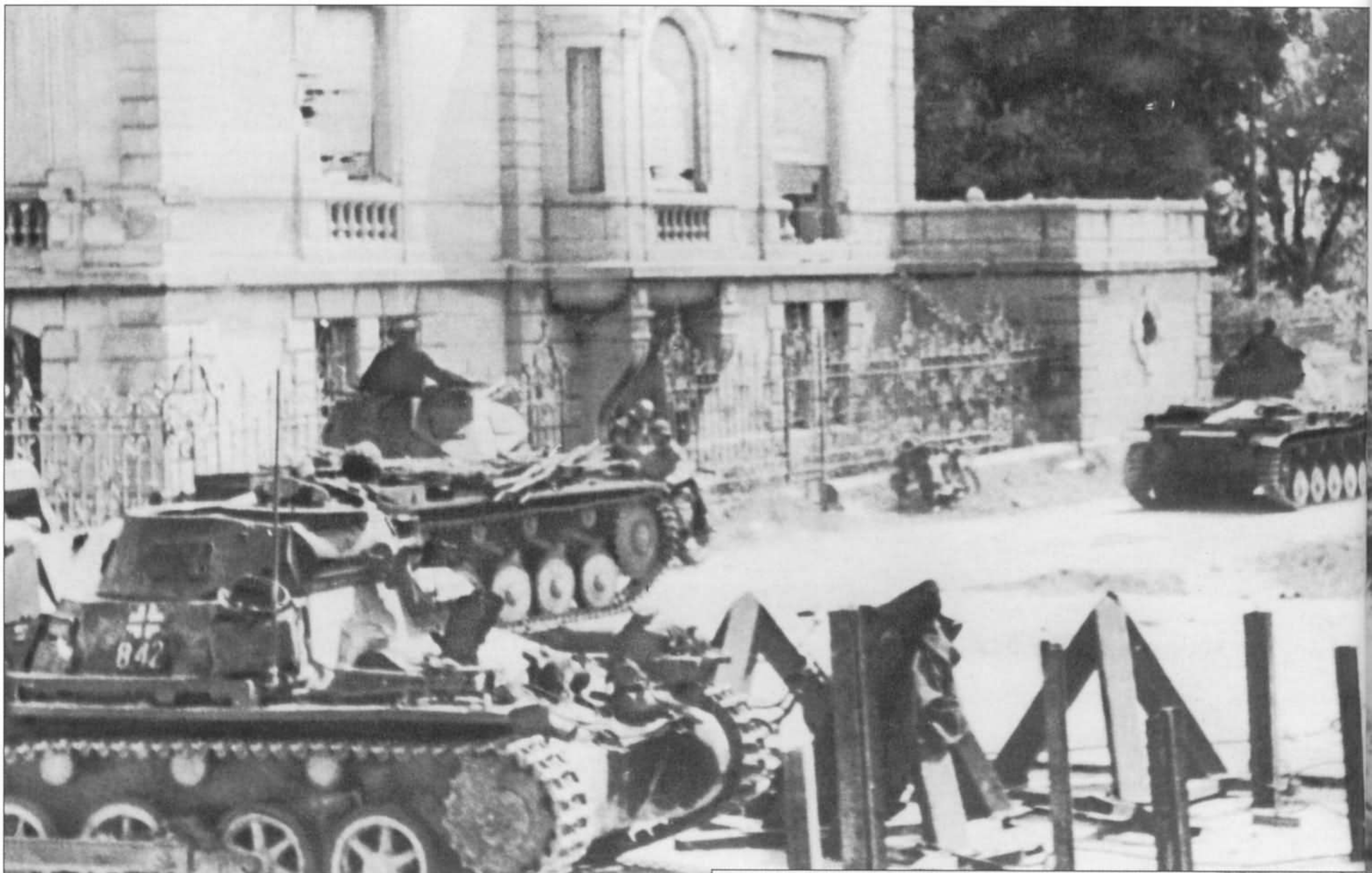




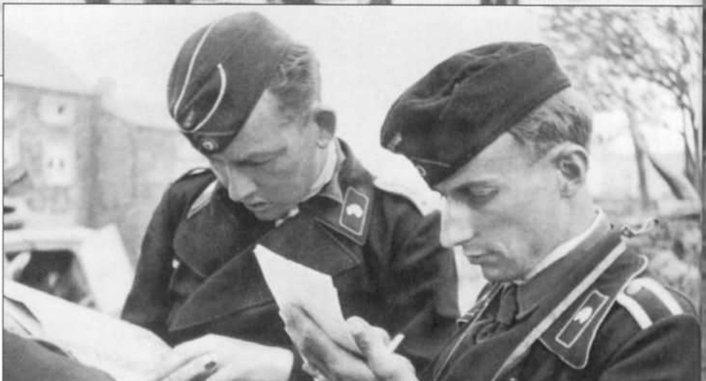




The commander of this Pz.Kpfw.38(t) has propped the cupola hatch open so that only his head is exposed as the tank turns off a French road to traverse a field. Along with the standard pattern of turret numbers, this Pz.Rgt.25 vehicle also has the yellow 7.Panzer-Division insignia just behind the thin national cross, and the tactical number repeated on a fender mounted rhomboid plate. The additional fender stowage bins were a common modification to these tanks due to the lack of internal space and many were fabricated by the unit workshops and thus quite similar.

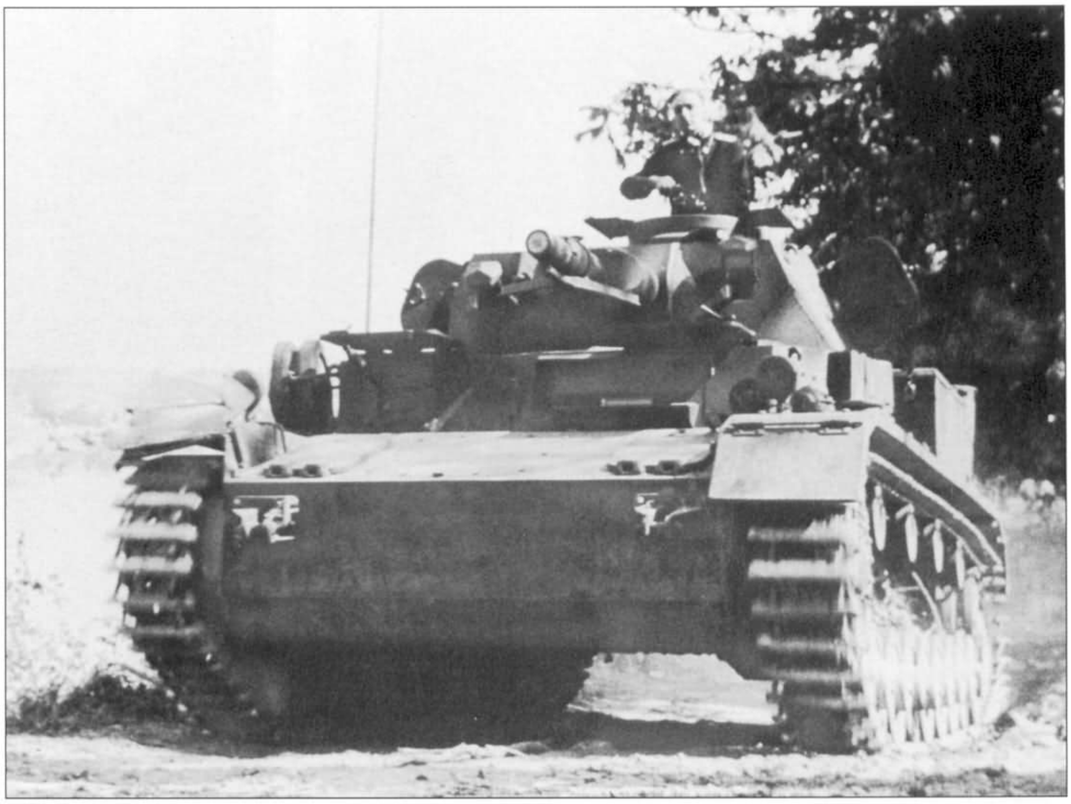


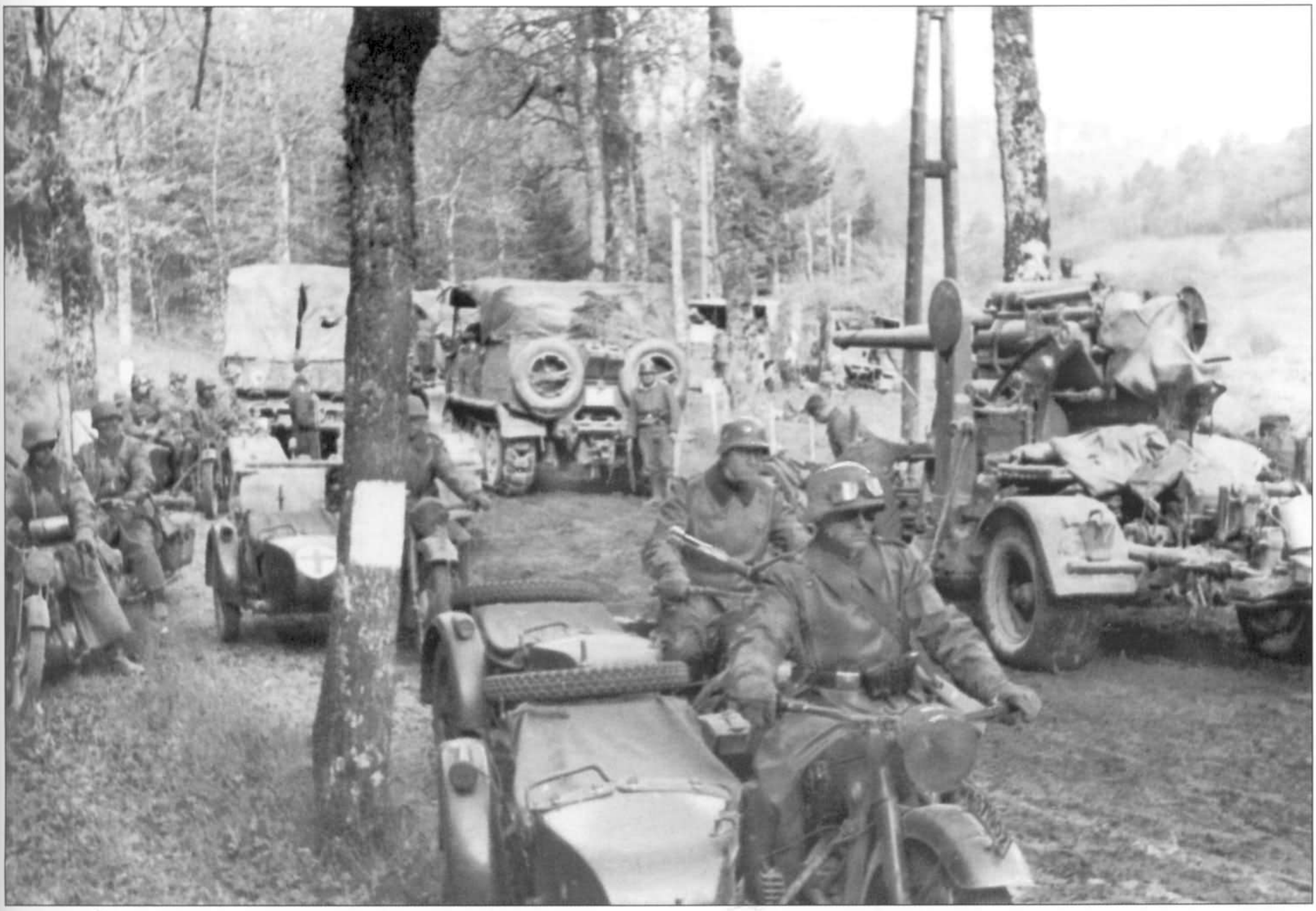
Panzer IIs pass a disabled Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.A in Sedan after the fighting. The tactical number "842" is seen on a black rhomboid plate. In front of the Panzer I are numerous steel anti-tank obstacles erected by the French. All the vehicles have very light colored roadwheels, invariable due to the dusty conditions.



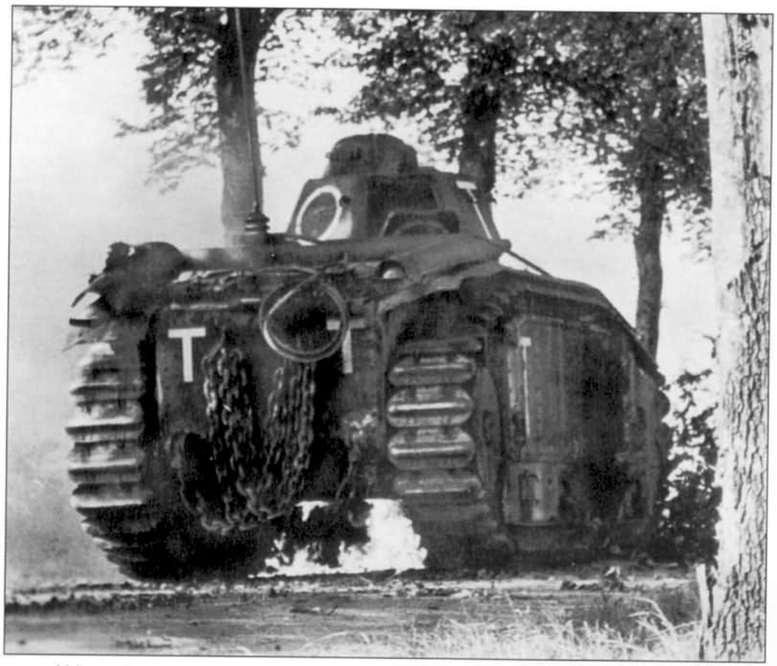
Panzer crewmen confer during a halt in the advance. The soldier in the foreground has the rank of Unteroffizier (Corporal) while the one holding the maps appears to be an Oberfeldwebel (Sergeant), although his shoulder-boards are not quite clear and he does wear a silver piped Feldmutze, which would suggest that he is an officer, not an NCO. The Feldjacke (field jacket) collar, collar patches and shoulder boards are all piped in rose pink, the Waffenfarbe (arm-of-service) color for all panzer troops.

Only 290 Pz.Kpfw.IV were in service at the start of Fall Gelb. With its low velocity 7.5cm Kwk 37 L/24 main armament, it was intended to act as a fire support and infantry support tank. This Ausf.D belonging to the 1. or 10.Panzer-Division is seen moving west of Sedan on May 14. Note both vision ports open on the turret front.



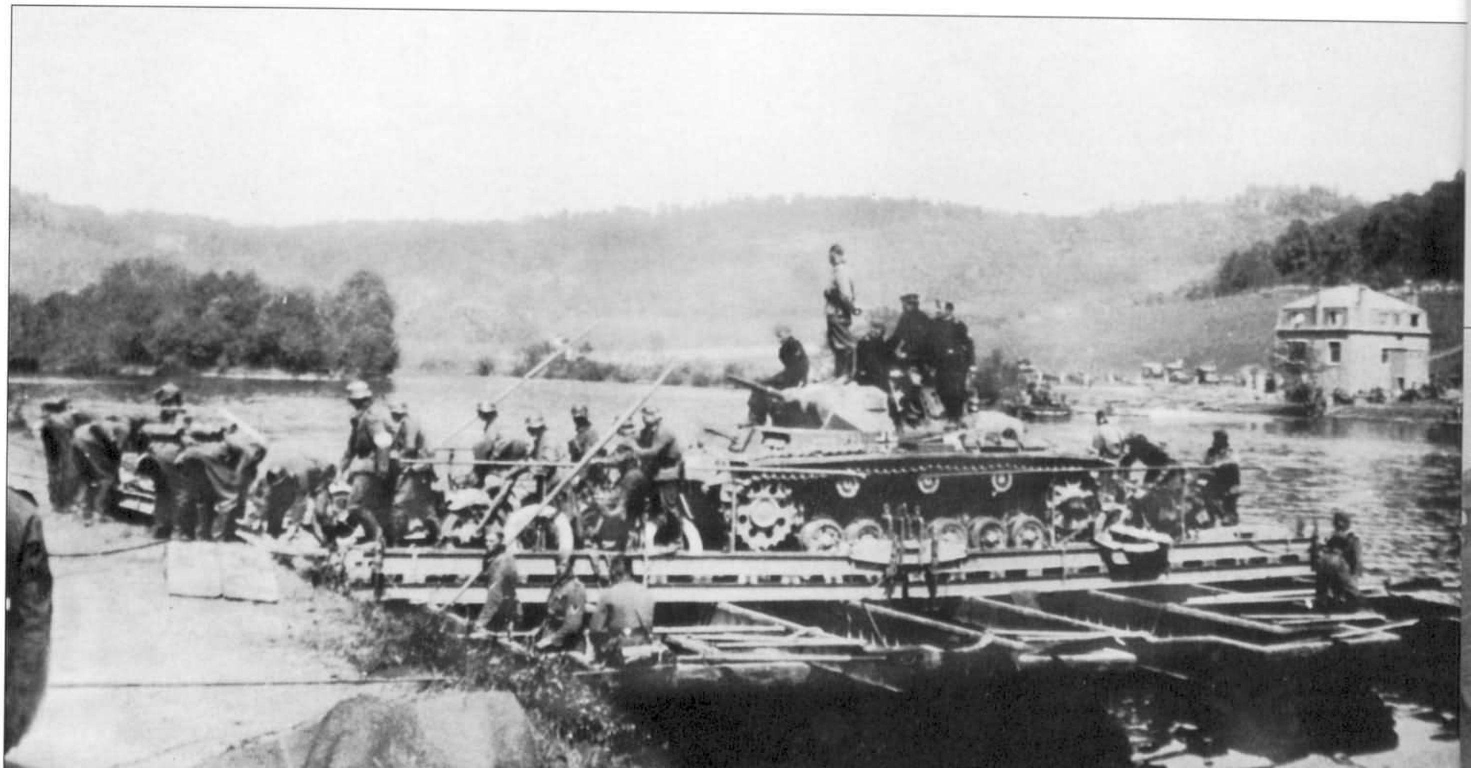


An interesting mix of vehicles traverse a road in the Sedan area. To the right a Daimler-Benz Type DBs7 half-track is in the process of hooking up an 8.8cm Flak 18 anti-aircraft gun. This was one of the many types of prime movers built in the 1930s by various manufacturers until the introduction of the most common version of the Sd.Kfz.7 built by Krauss-Maffei. In the foreground are BMW R12 motorcycle sidecar combinations while halted in the ditch to the left is a column of Kradschutzen (motorcycle rifleman) mounted on what appear to be DKW NZ 350 motorcycles. Other than the Red Cross on the third sidecar and the standard Wehrmacht license plates, no other markings are visible on any of the vehicles.



Although the front glacis is not visible, this Renault B1bis is named "Gueppratte" and was one of eight tanks decimated by German forces on May 15 near the town of Denee. The tanks were from 37ème B.C.C., this particular one from 3ème Compagnie, 1er Section. Defending against the attack was Inf.Rgt.28 of 8.Infanterie-Division. Since the standard German anti-tank guns could not penetrate the armor of the B1bis, 10.5cm artillery pieces from Art.Rgt.8 were used in this engagement to help stop the French assault.

German officers and NCOs confer with the aid of maps inside Belgian town. Behind them a column of Kfz.15 passenger cars can b seen stretching down the road. This photograph was taken near Hou and these soldiers are therefore part of Hoth's XV.Panzerkorps.



The Meuse was crossed by 5.Panzer-Division on May 13 to the south of Houx. Pontoon barges were used initially to ferry equipment across until th engineers could construct a pontoon bridge. Here, a Pz.Kpfw.III and group of motorcycles have just reached the west bank and are waiting for the offloadin ramp to be emplaced. In the background can be seen many more vehicles and equipment waiting to cross.

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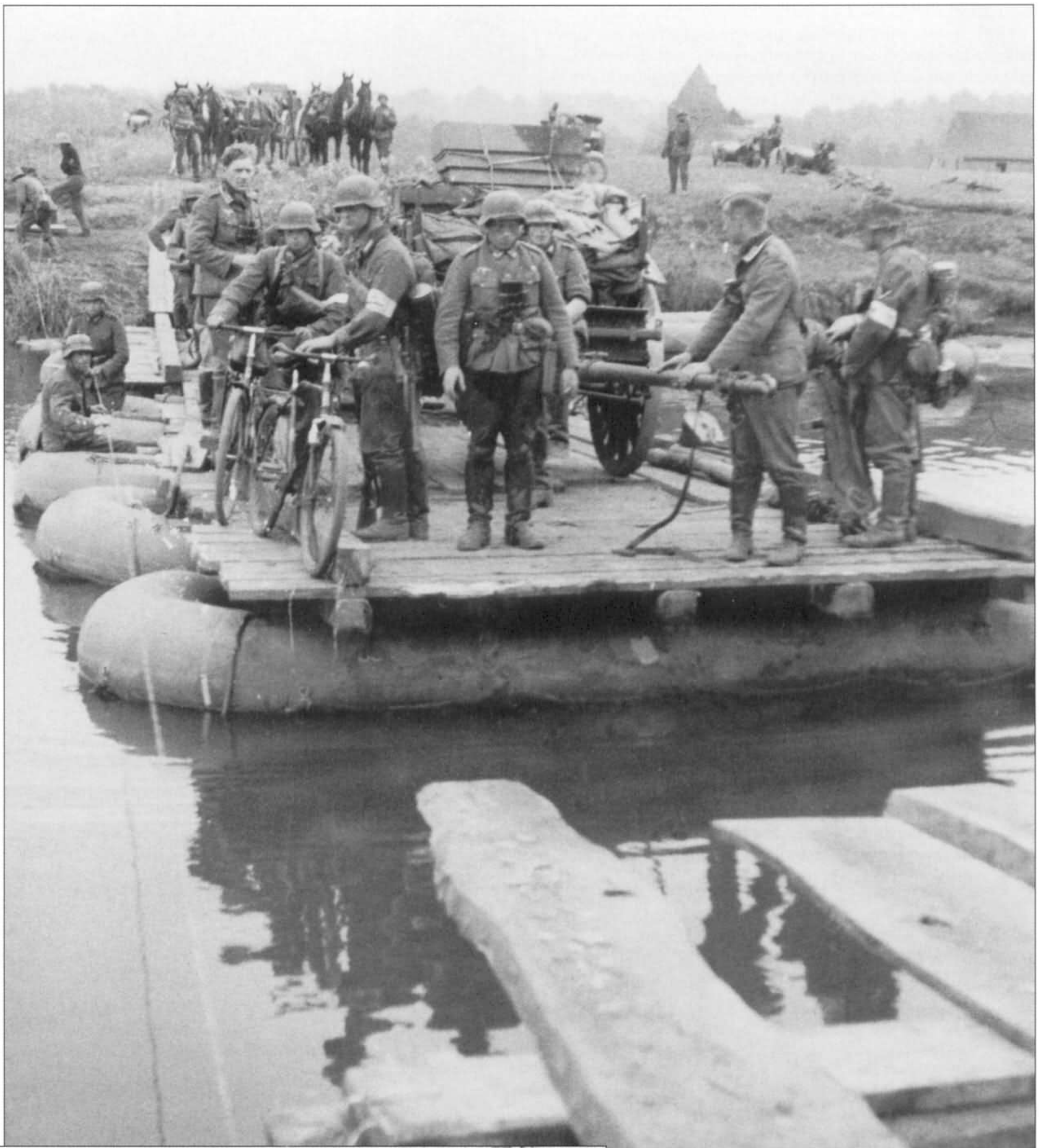
German infantry following in the wake of the armored spearhead through Belgium. Pioniers have constructed a pontoon ferry to cross this small river. A fully loaded horse-drawn limber is on board while in the background the horse team and another wagon wait their turn to cross, as well as a couple of motorcycle sidecar combinations. Much of the German army depended on horses for its motive power, as well as bicycles, as evidenced by the two soldiers to the left. Three soldiers wear white armbands, probably to designate them as medics.



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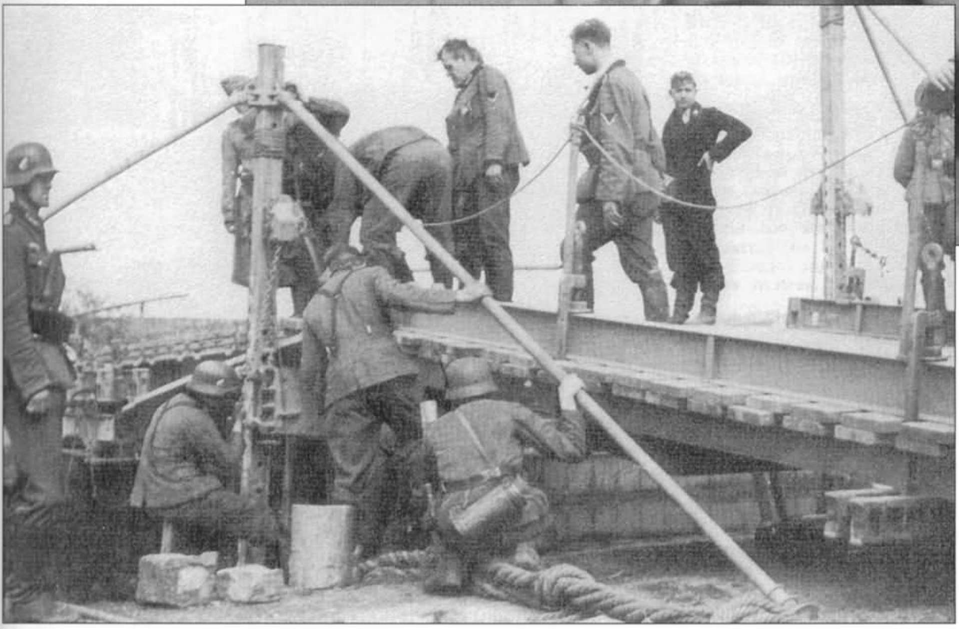

By May 13, the Panzer-Divisions of XIX.Panzerkorps had reached Sedan and prepared to cross the Meuse. Each division was assigned its own crossing location and met varying levels of French resistance. By the late evening of May 14 each panzer division had completed their own pontoon bridge. This photo shows engineers completing 10.Panzer-Division's bridge near Wadelincourt to the south of Sedan. A tank commander in his black panzer uniform waits patiently while observing the work. He wears a field gray Feldmutze as an alternative to the unpopular beret, as regulation black versions were not issued until later on in 1940.

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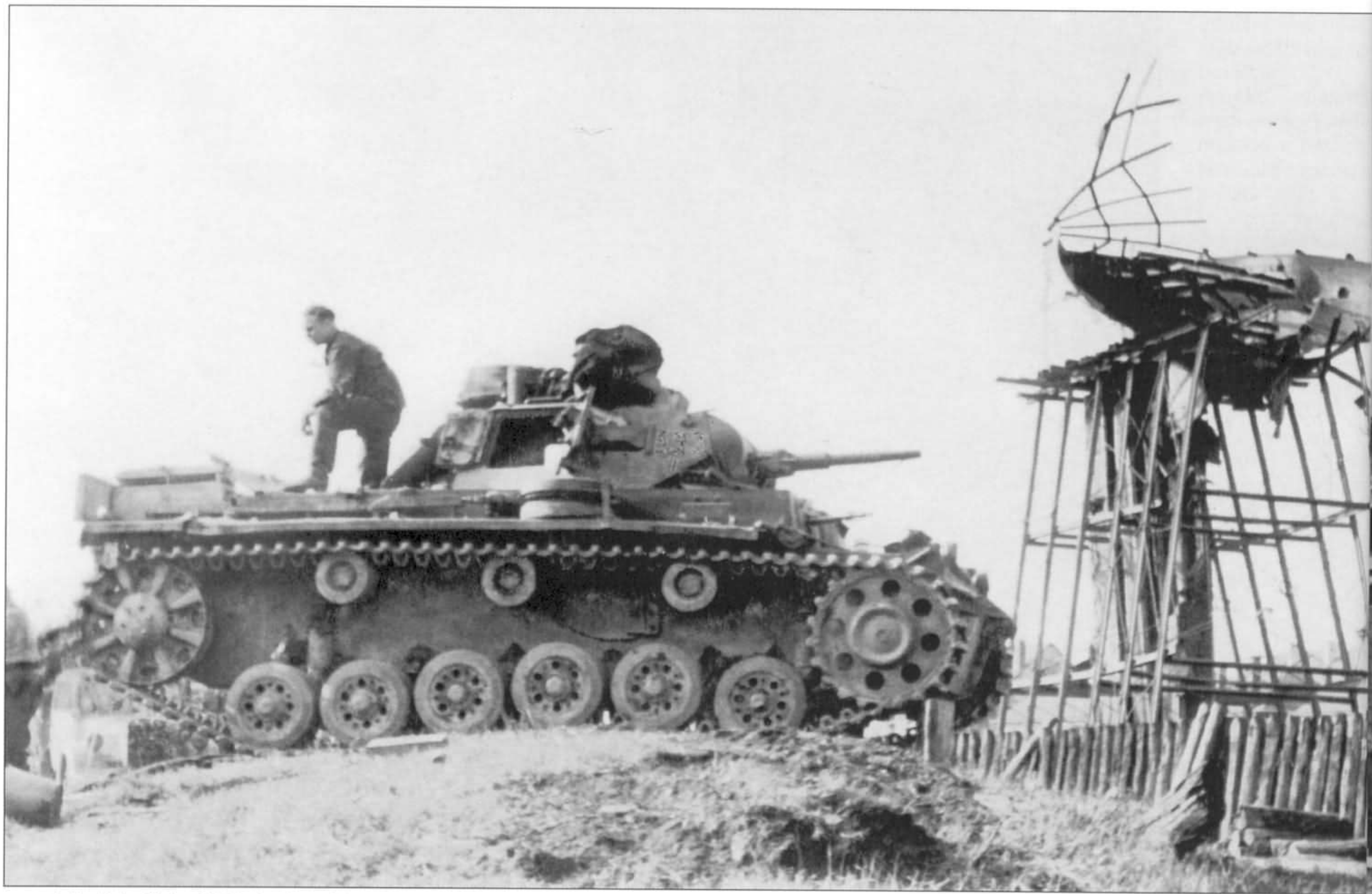
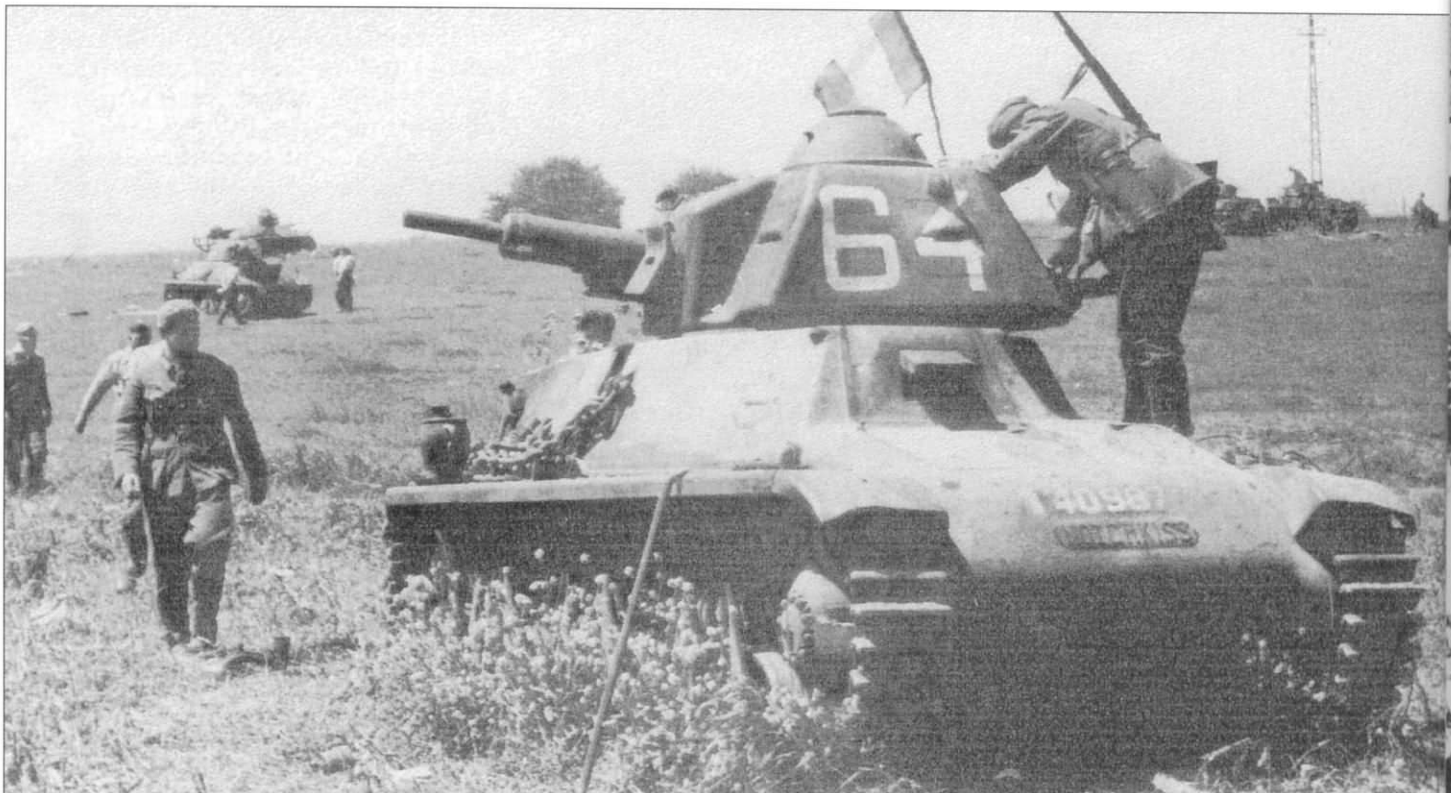


A Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf. F halted outside a town on May 15. The crew is using the opportunity to wash up and most likely perform whatever maintenance th can. Although censors have tried to obliterate the markings, the last two digits of the tactical number in front of the turret view port can be seen, "33" in wh outline. Below the turret number is what appears to be the oakleaf emblem of 1.Panzer-Division. The front portion of the fender has been torn off.



German soldiers examine a field of French tanks destroyed or abandoned during the Battle for the Gembloux Gap. This battle was fought over the cou of four days between May 12 and 15 and involved hundreds of tanks from 3. and 4.Panzer-Divisions and the French 2ème and 3ème DLM (Light Mechaniz Division). Both sides suffered numerous losses but the French tankers proved they could hold their own against the German panzers. This Hotchkiss H- from the 3ème DLM carries the standard national tricolor and matricule (serial) on the front hull and flies a French flag from the turret. This was as pe directive issued May 22 by the French command to provide a quick recognition symbol for friendly forces. In the background are other H-35, H-39 and Som

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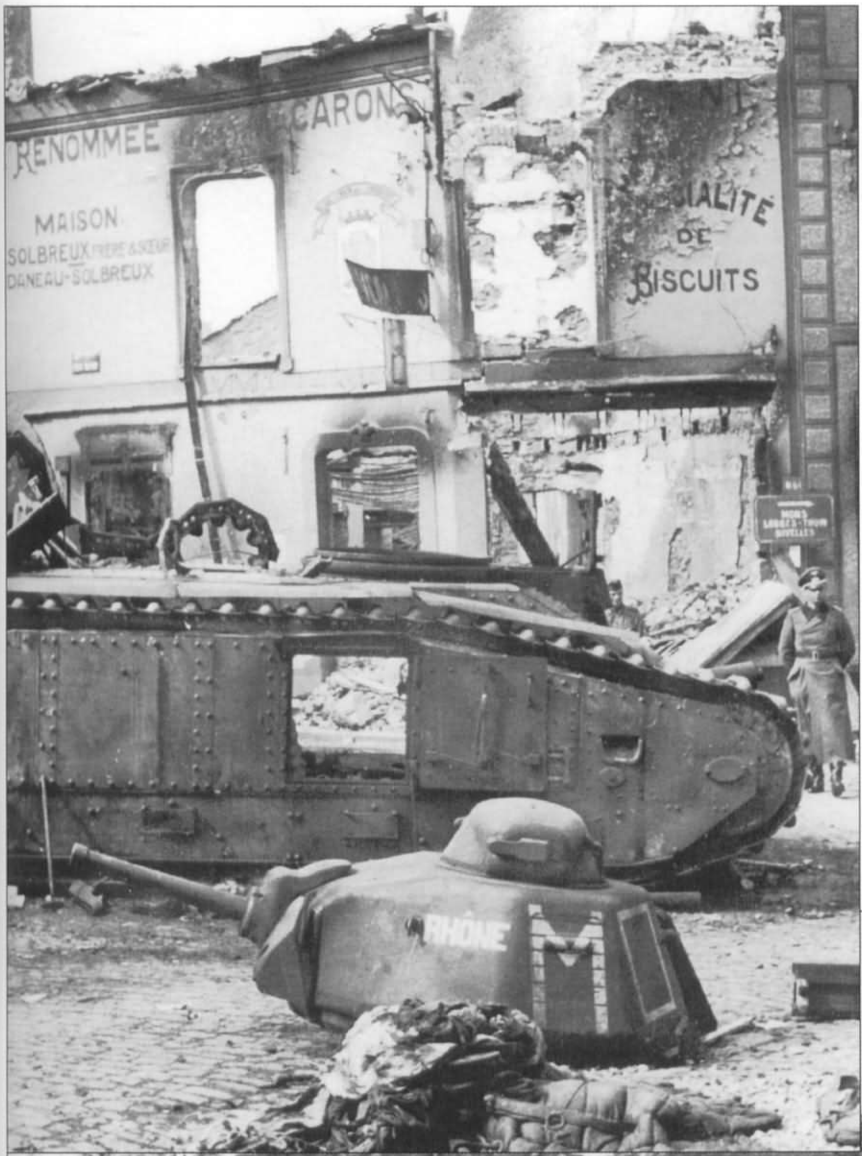
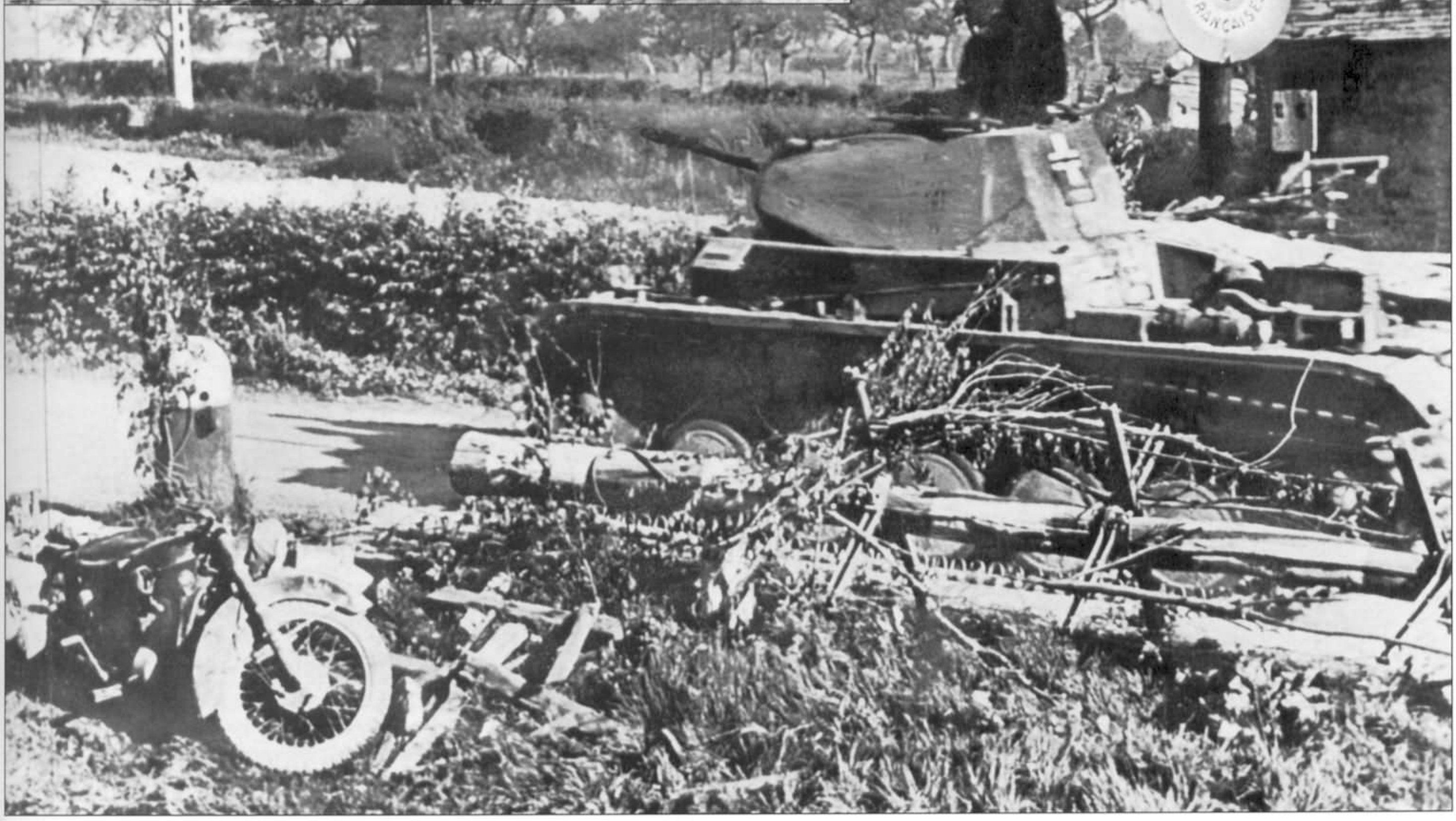
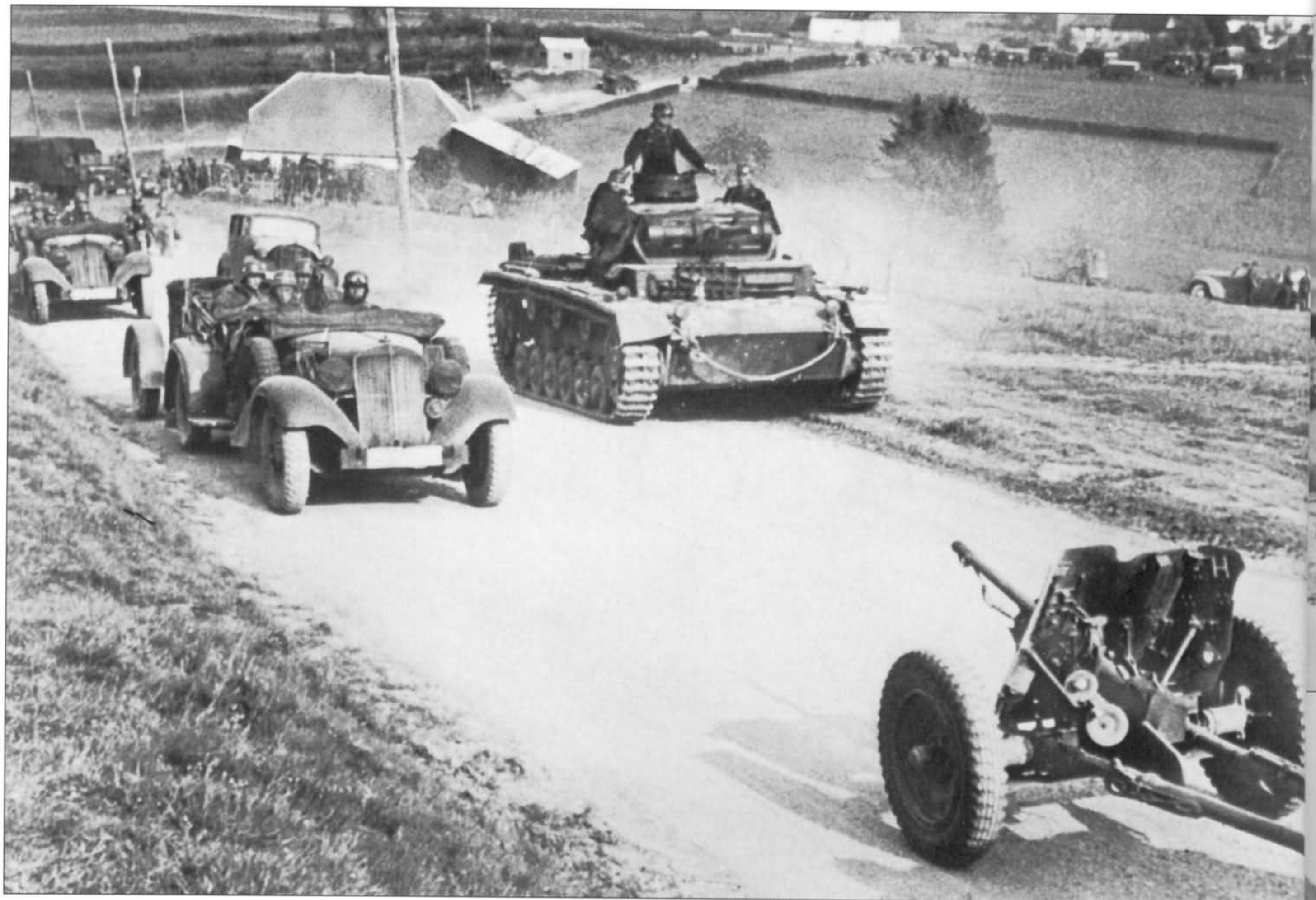


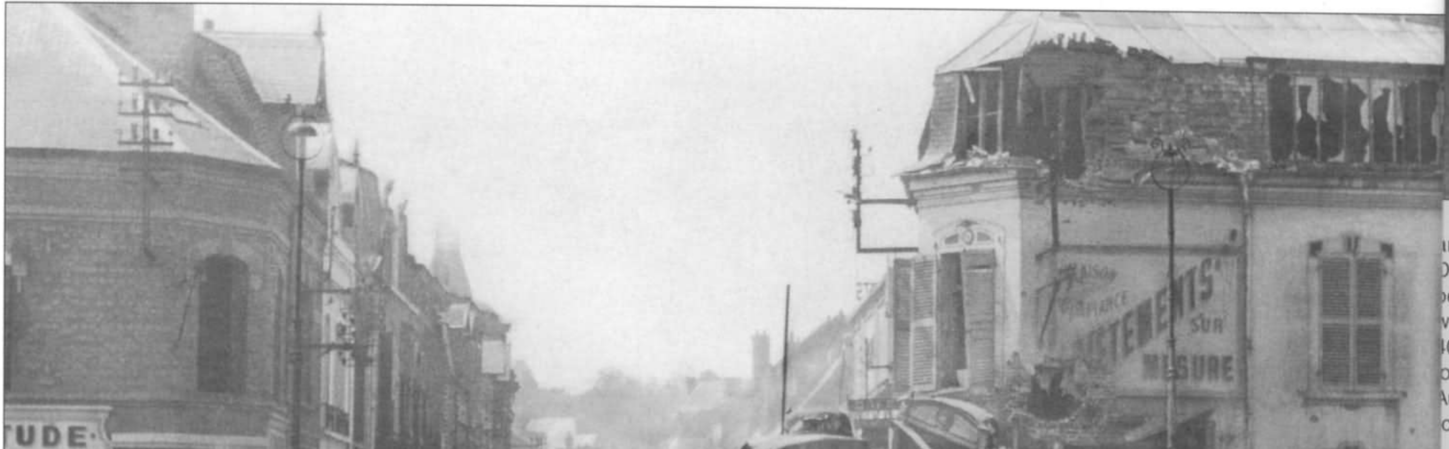
This French Renault B1bis was set on fire by its crew and subsequently exploded, dislodging the turret. "Rhone" was one of five remaining tanks of the 37ème B.C.C. that were destroyed by their crews in the town Beaumont on May 16 after being surrounded by Kampfgruppe Harde of the 5.Panzer-Division and running out of fuel. Unlike their German counterparts, French tanks were usually colorfully painted and marked. In this case the white square denotes 1er Compagnie (1st Company) while a playing card symbol within the square denotes the Section, unfortunately not visible here but probably a red spade for the 1er Section. The "M" is the section code letter. After 3 days, 37ème B.C.C. had lost all 33 of their Renaults to enemy action and fuel shortages.

On May 16, Rommel's 7.Panzer-Division crossed the French border at Clairfayts. Numerous pictures were taken of this event including this one of a Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf. A-C. Interestingly, this particular photo appears with the turret tactical number censored as shown here, and uncensored, which clearly shows the number "141" in the standard divisional format of red with white outline. The divisional insignia is painted beside the national cross on the rear superstructure plate and turret, and a black rhomboid plate is carried at the rear of the engine deck with "141" in white, although it is cropped from this photo. In the foreground is a BMW R35 while the sign on the post reads "French Customs"





A column of Kfz.12 (Horch 830 R) towing 3.7cm Pak 35/36 anti-tank guns and trailers passes a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.E on a dusty road in Belgium on M 17. The speed of the advance over the previous week left many of the infantry and supporting units far behind. In the background can be seen numero cars and trucks as they attempt to catch up with the panzer regiments. The letter "H" on the inside of the gunshield probably indicates the individual gun wit the company, as the standard anti-tank company at this time was equipped with 9 guns.



"Rapide", a Renault B1bis from 1er Compagnie, 8ème B.C.C., 2ème D.C.R., was disabled on May 17 by elements of 6.Panzer-Division while defend this bridge across the Oise-Sambre Canal in the town of the Guise. The French commanders continually misused their armored units in situations such this, committing individual tanks to static defensive positions without any support, instead of using their mobility and large numbers to their advanta Although the camouflage pattern is not clear in this photo, other tanks in this unit were painted green and ochre with the pattern outlined in black.

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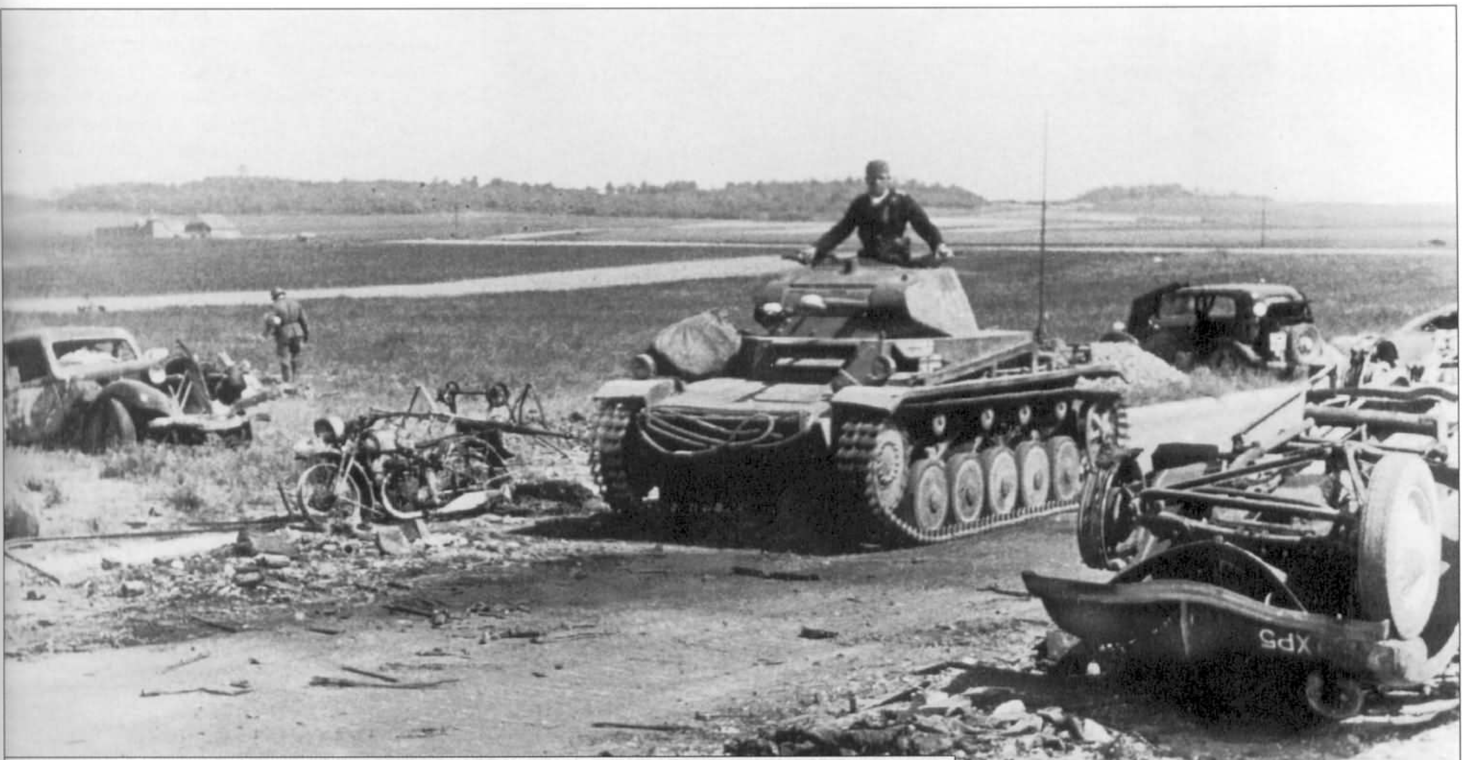
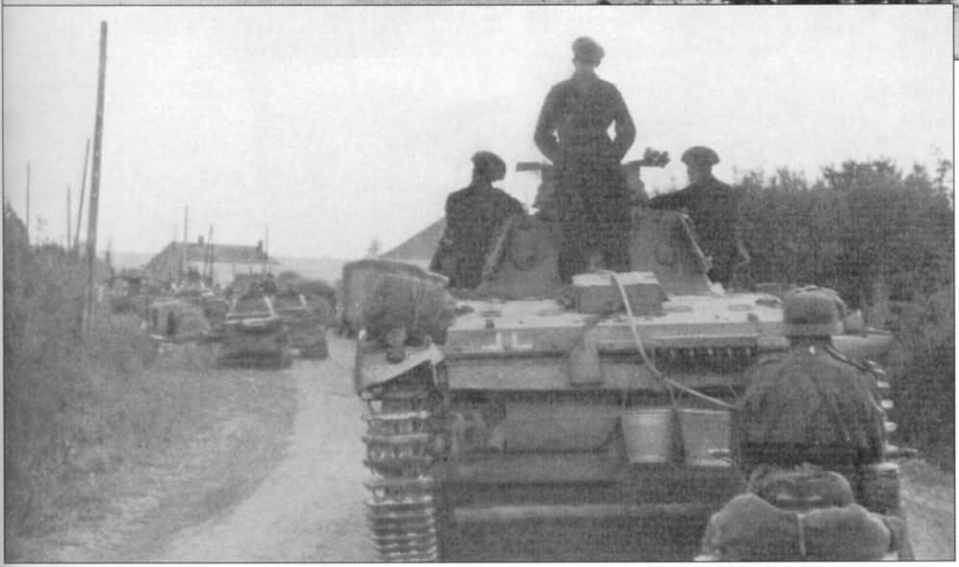
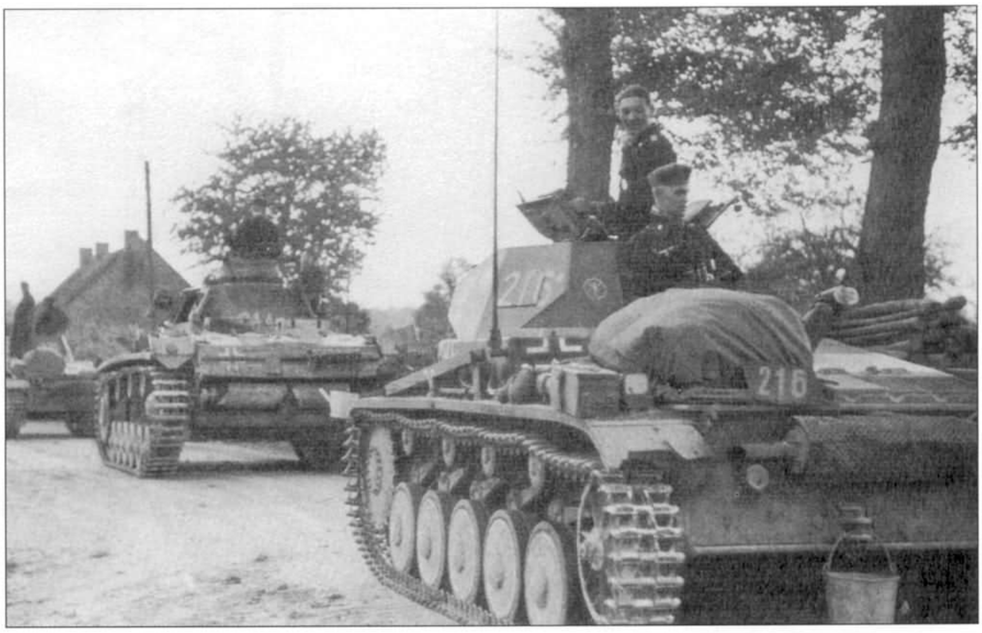


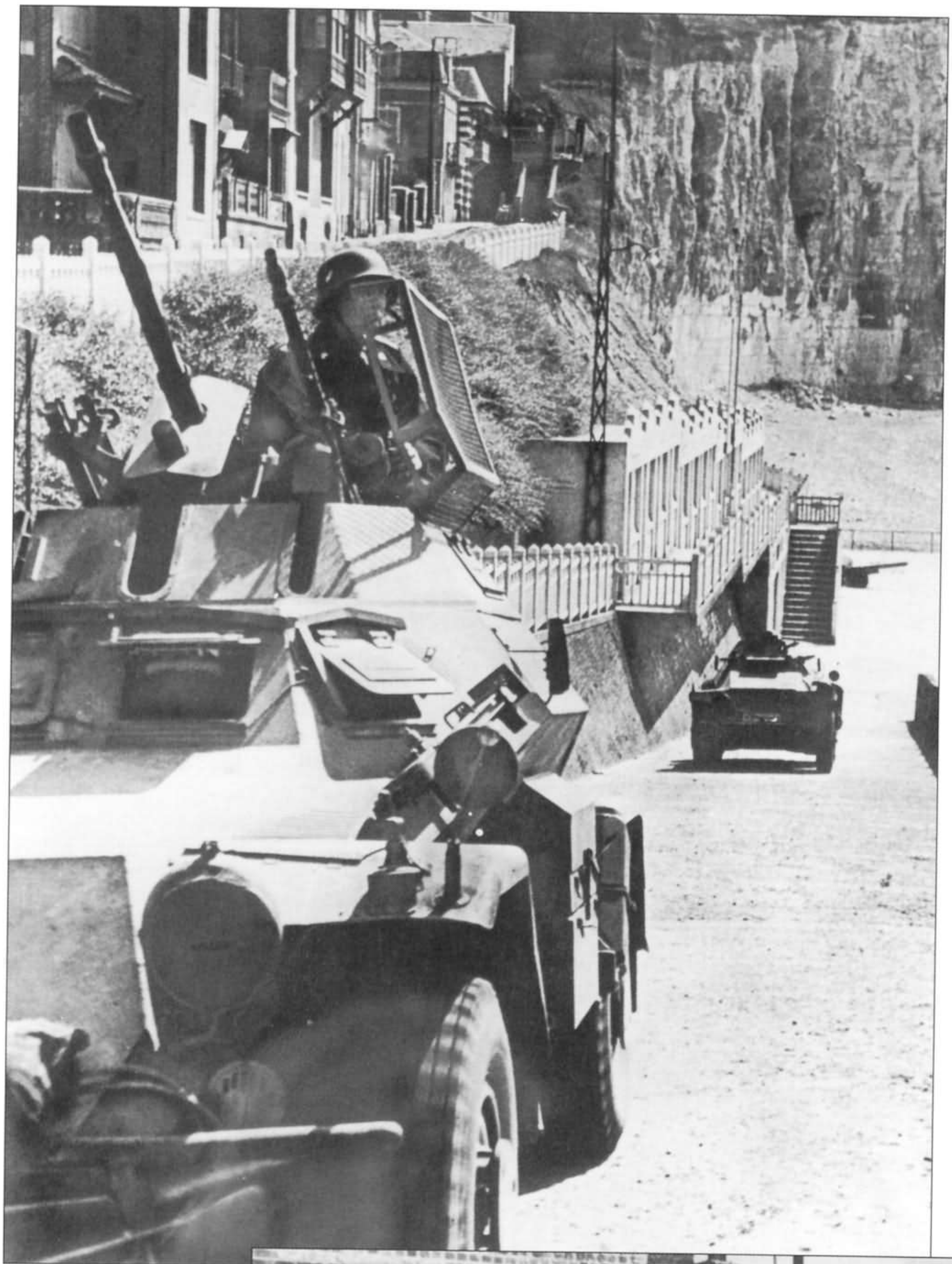
A Pz.Kpfw.II, possibly from 1.Panzer-Division, passes destroyed French cars and a burned up motorcycle on a road near Peronne, sometime between May 17-19. A solid white tactical number "343" is on the turret. Peronne is on the Somme and therefore was vital for the follow-up campaign. The Peronne sector was assigned to XVI.Armeekorps for Fall Rot, which included 3. and 4.Panzer-Divisions.



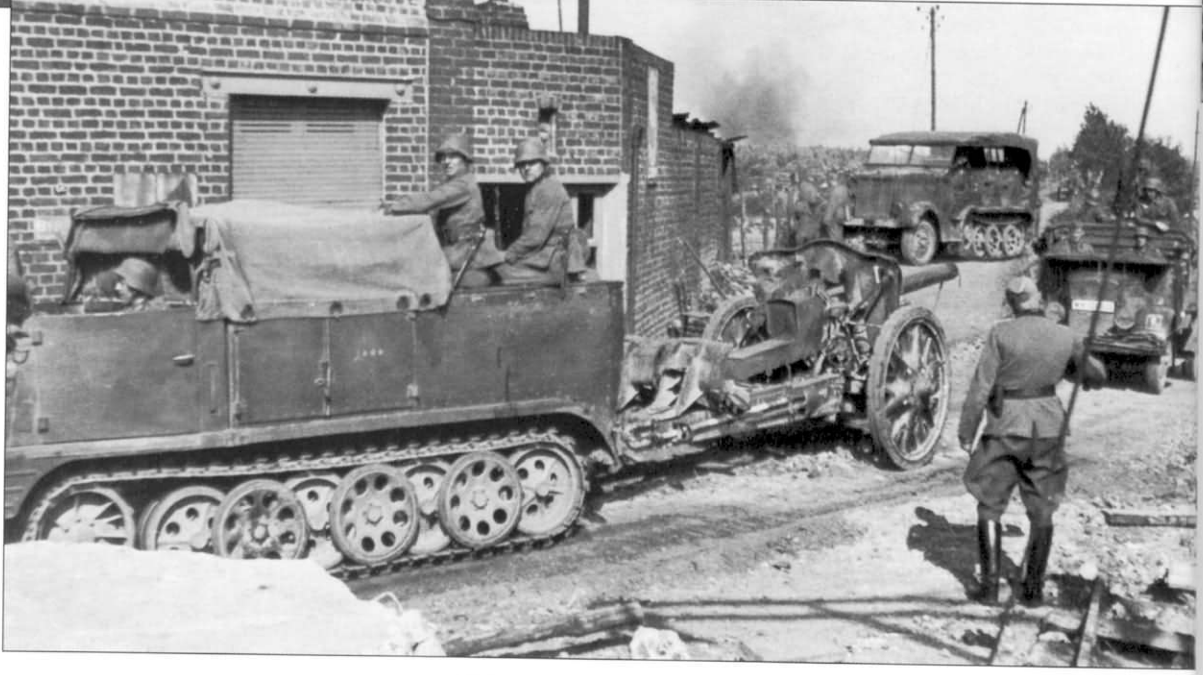
A traffic jam of 7.Panzer-Division vehicles around the town of Maroilles, on or about May 18. Delays such as this caused Rommel's units to become dispersed over a long distance and it was only through blind luck that Cambrai, about 40 km west of Maroilles, was taken by a minimal force without a fight. The crew of this Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf. E or F wait impatiently while further up the road a group of Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf B. wait as well.

A column of tanks from 4.Panzer-Division pass through Noyelles in the Mormal Forest region on May 20. Significant fighting took place in and about the Mormal from May 18-20. This Pz.Kpfw.II displays an interesting selection of markings. The turret tactical numbers are in yellow with a dot to signify Pz.Rgt.36 and the divisional insignia is on the turret rear in yellow as well. Note that the tactical number is also on the rear plate of the turret, a small portion of which can be seen just below the crewmember's arm. The black rhomboid plate carries "216" in yellow. The Pz.Kpfw.III in front carries the divisional sign on the rear cupola bulge and a "244" tactical number.





Armored cars of Aufkl.Abt.5 from 2.Panze Division leave the beach at Ault on May 21. In t foreground is an Sd.Kfz.222, followed by Sd.Kfz.221. The only visible marking is a tactic symbol on the fender for a headquarters un Although it was not intended for units to cross t Somme, reconnaissance was in fact conduct as far as the River Bresle, some 30 kilomete south of the Somme. As the southernmost un 2.Panzer-Division advanced along the north ba of the Somme until it reached the coast Noyelles, and then proceeded north to the port Boulogne.



An Sd.Kfz.11 halftrack displaying the 7.Panzer-Division symbol on its stowage locker door tows a 10.5cm leFH 18 through a destroyed French town, possibly Le Bassee. Behind it is a 3-ton truck with its license plate mounted in an unusual position on the radiator grille. The 5-ton halftrack in the background is the engineer's version of the Sd.Kfz.6.

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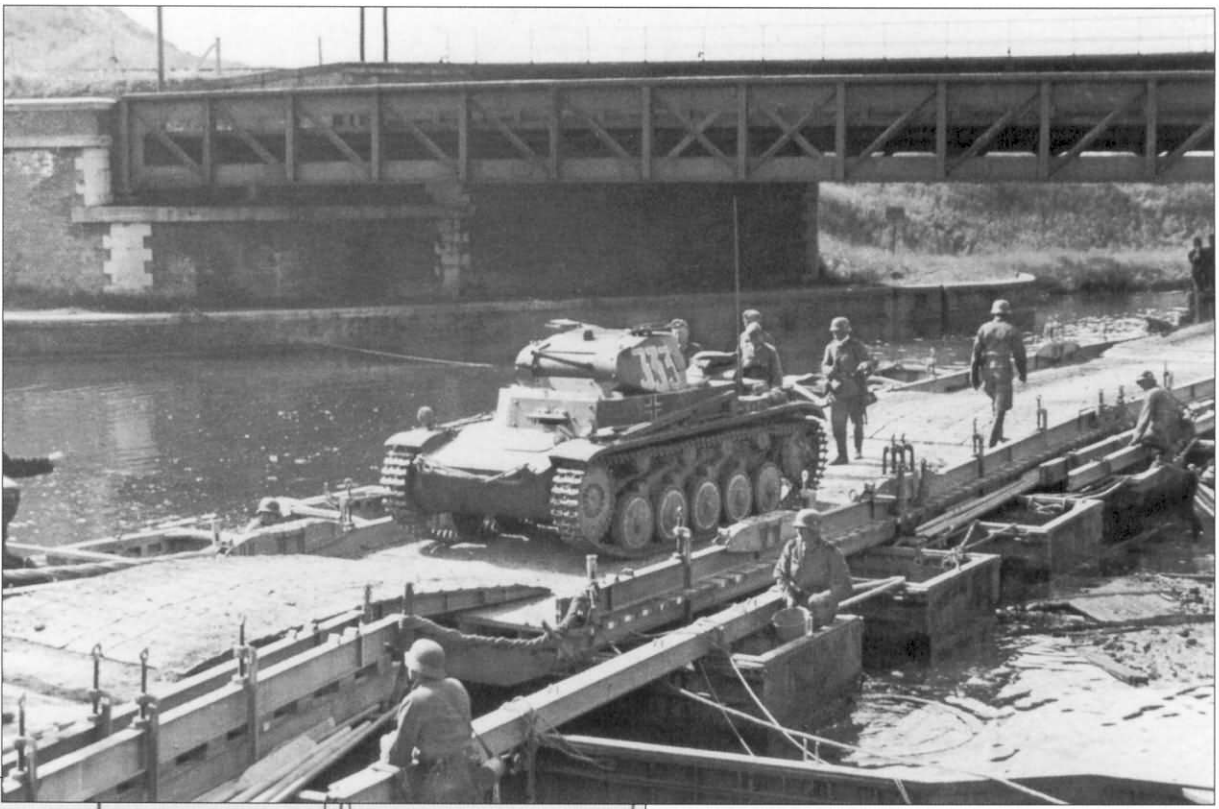
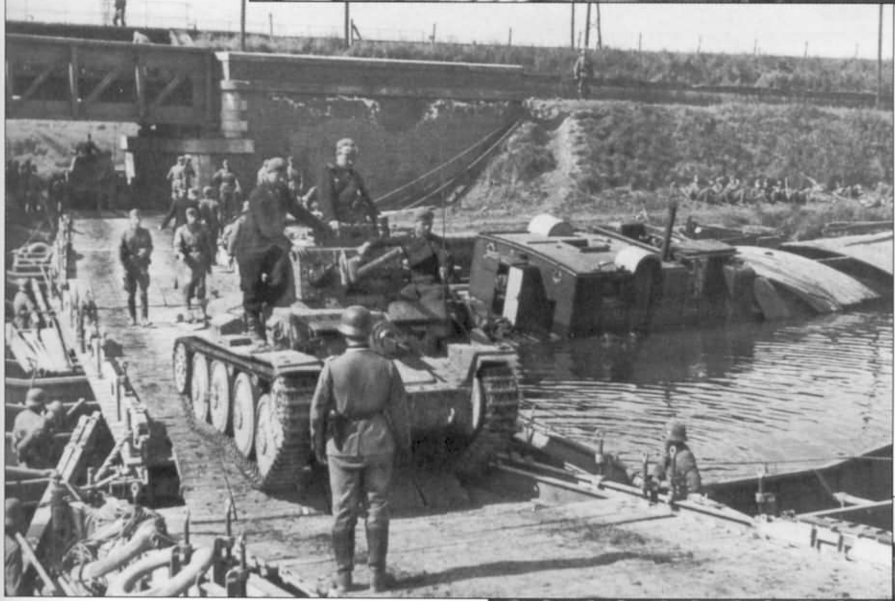
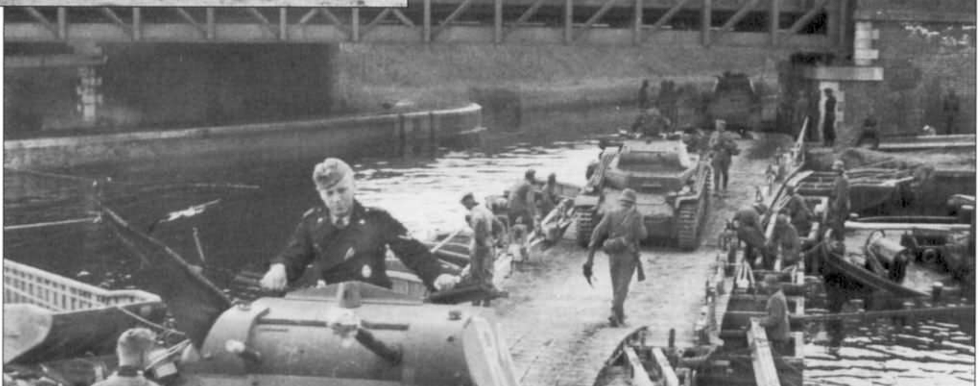
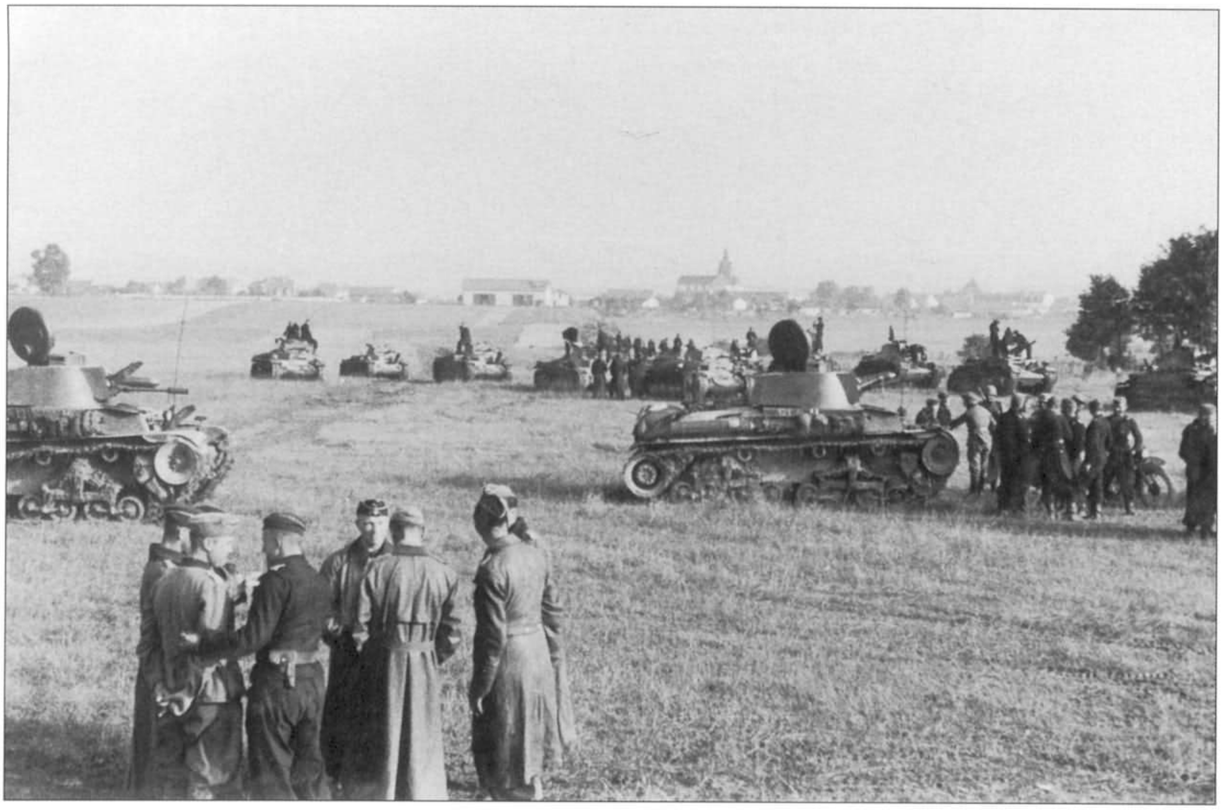
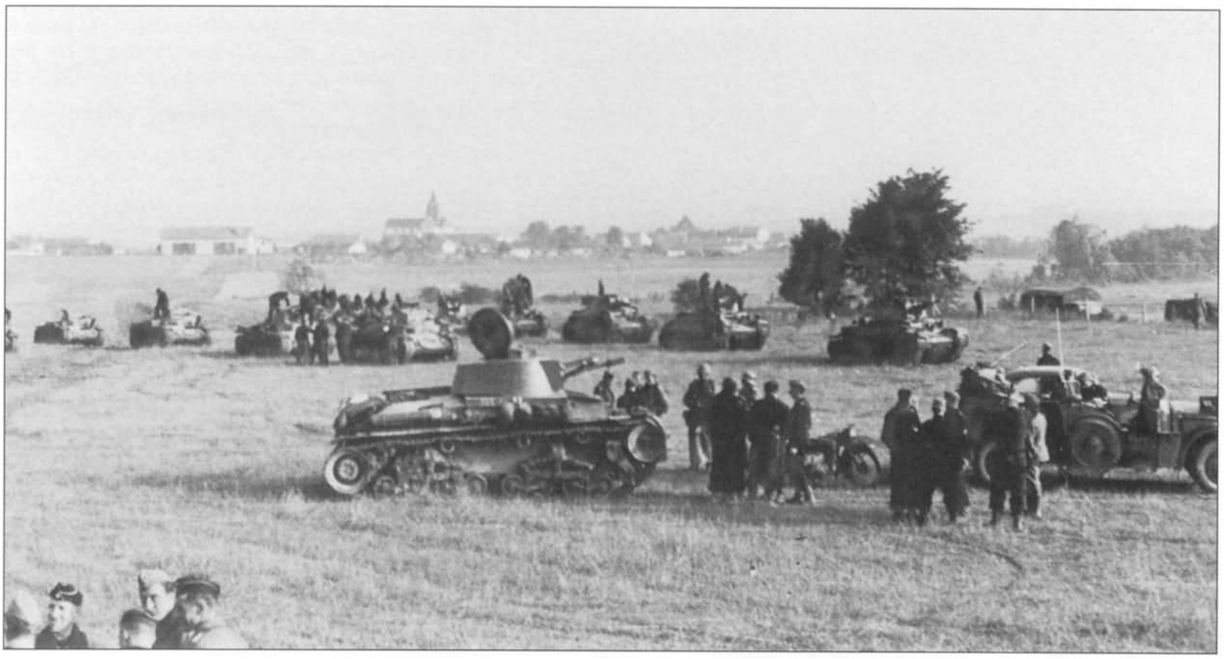




On May 24, Hitler ordered a halt to his divisions on the left side of Dunkirk as they were preparing to assault the pocket. After 3 days of bombardment by the Luftwaffe, the order was rescinded. 7.Panzer-Division was at the La Bassee Canal and the 3 day respite gave the BEF time to prepare and made the crossing much more difficult. The engineers had difficulties constructing bridges due to the many sunken barges in the canal that restricted pontoon locations and straightness of the structure. The first Panzer III across this 16-ton bridge nearly ended up in the water so additional work was required before the bulk of the armor could cross. These pictures were taken by Rommel himself and show Pz.Kpfw.IIs and 38(t)s crossing. The first Panzer II has a tactical number "333" that appears hand-painted while in the second photo some of the sunken barges can be seen. The regimental command group appears next, with the lead tank displaying number "R1?".







A set photographs taken in field near the Dunki perimeter after th "Halt" order was issue by Hitler on May 2 This three-day perio was an opportunity f the divisions to rest an reorganize. These a men and equipme from 6.Panzer-Divisio since the Pz.Kpfw.35 was only issued to th division. In th background a Pz.Kpfw.II and a fe Pz.Kpfw.38(t), which quite unusual as no were officially issued 6.Panzer-Division. It possible that these a from 8.Panzer-Divisio which was operati alongside 6.Panze Division during th time, although it wou not be typical to ha two different units such close proximity one another. If thes are 8.Panzer-Divisio tanks, the photos a quite unique, as th unit was seldo photographed duri this campaign. Bas on the demeanor of t personnel, it is obvio that they are n concerned with t possibility of an attac

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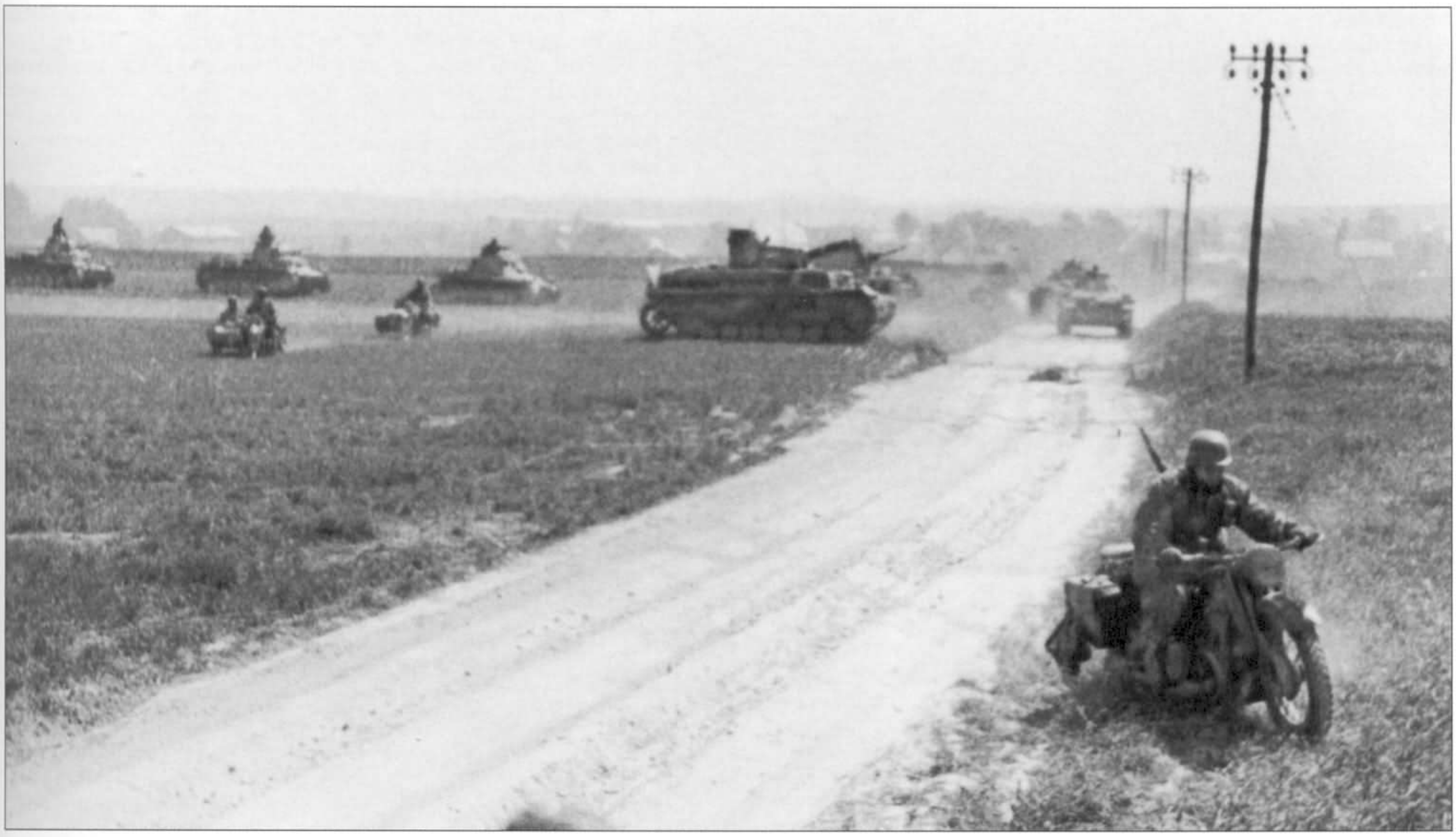
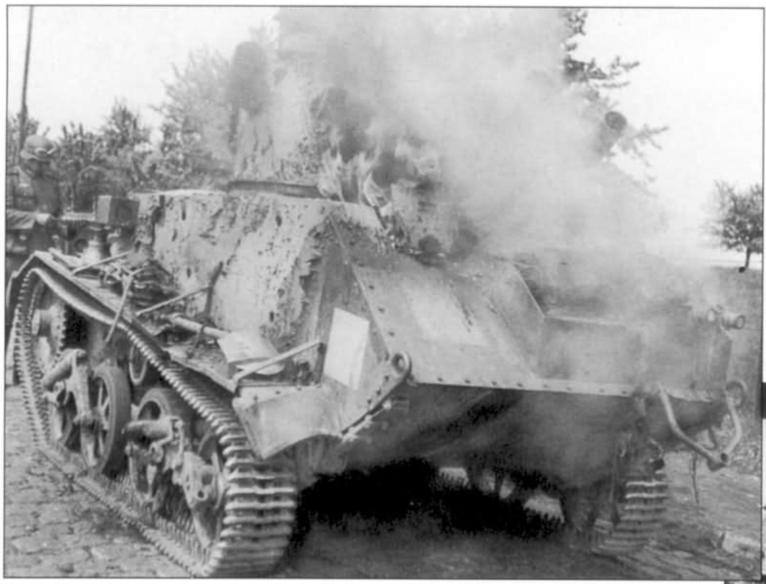
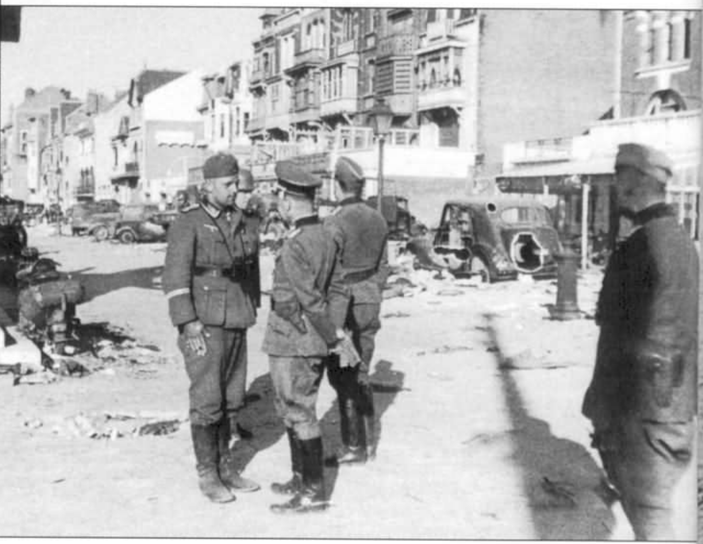


Several types of panzers and motorcycles from 7.Panzer-Division advance across a French field towards a road and village. Nearest to the camera is a Pz.Kpfw.IV, followed by a kl.Pz.Bef.Wg.I Ausf.B and two Pz.Kpfw.II. Immediately behind the Panzer IV is what appears to be Pz.Kpfw.38(t). As seen here, motorcycle mounted infantry was a primary component of the German blitzkrieg and although vulnerable to small arms fire, it allowed the infantry to keep pace with the panzer units during their advances.

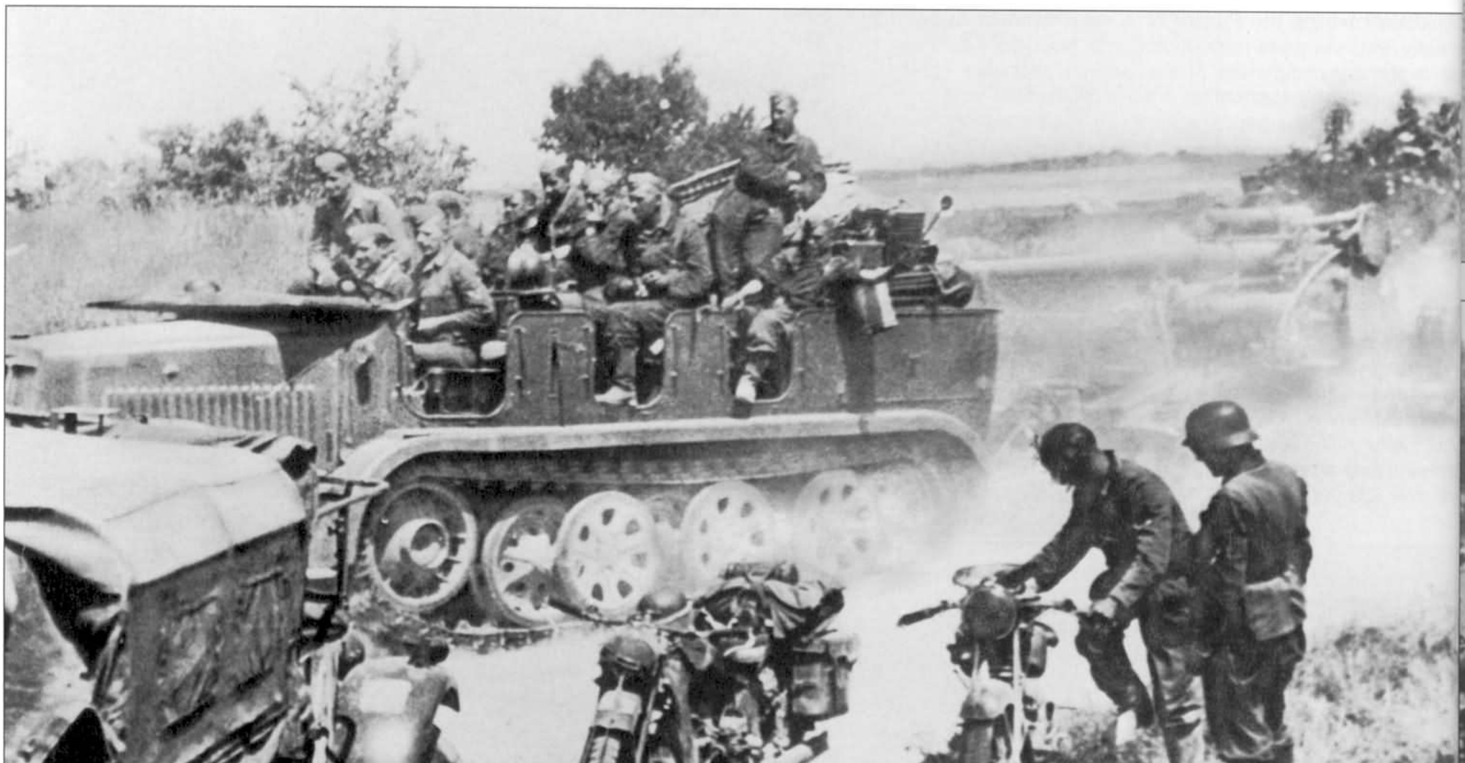
While the panzers rested, the evacuation at Dunkirk began. Termed "Operation Dynamo" by the British, the beachhead was under constant bombardment by Luftwaffe aircraft and as these photographs show, the destruction was immense. Many vehicles were also destroyed by the BEF to avoid capture. The last ship left Dunkirk on June 4, with the Germans only a few kilometers from the beaches, at which time over 338,000 men had been evacuated.



A German soldier examines a burning Mk. VIB of the Britis Expeditionary Force (BEF). Of the approximately 640 BEF tanks i France, including those of the 1st Armoured Division that arrive between May 15 and 19, over 380 were the Mk. IVB light tank Unfortunately, it was little more than a fast reconnaissance vehicle being poorly armed and armored, and no match for most of the Germa tanks. The white square was a standard identification marking on a BEF tanks.



The first Wehrmacht unit to be officially considered "elite" and granted the privilege of wearing a cuff-band, Infanterie-Regiment Großdeutschland was one of the few units which fought under the direct command of OKH – Oberkommando des Heeres (Army High Command) - at Dunkirk. Unlike most SS units, the cuff band was worn on the right arm so this clearly identifies these soldiers, which could be on a street in Calais or Dunkirk. Numerous cars and trucks appear in the background, many destroyed or damaged by the fighting.



While the panzer divisions turned north to surround the Allies in northern France and Belgium, infantry formations were tasked with securing th southern flank along the Somme. A small bridgehead had been established at Abbeville, which was defended by 57.Infanterie-Division, with no armor suppo and 3.7cm Pak 35/36 anti-tank guns. From May 28 to June 4, the French and British attacked the bridgehead numerous times but failed to dislodge th Germans. To combat the armor, 88mm guns from Flak-Abteilung I./64 were brought forward, such as this Sd.Kfz.7 halftrack towing a Flak 18 past tw motorcyclists. The one to the left appears to be a Zundapp K500.

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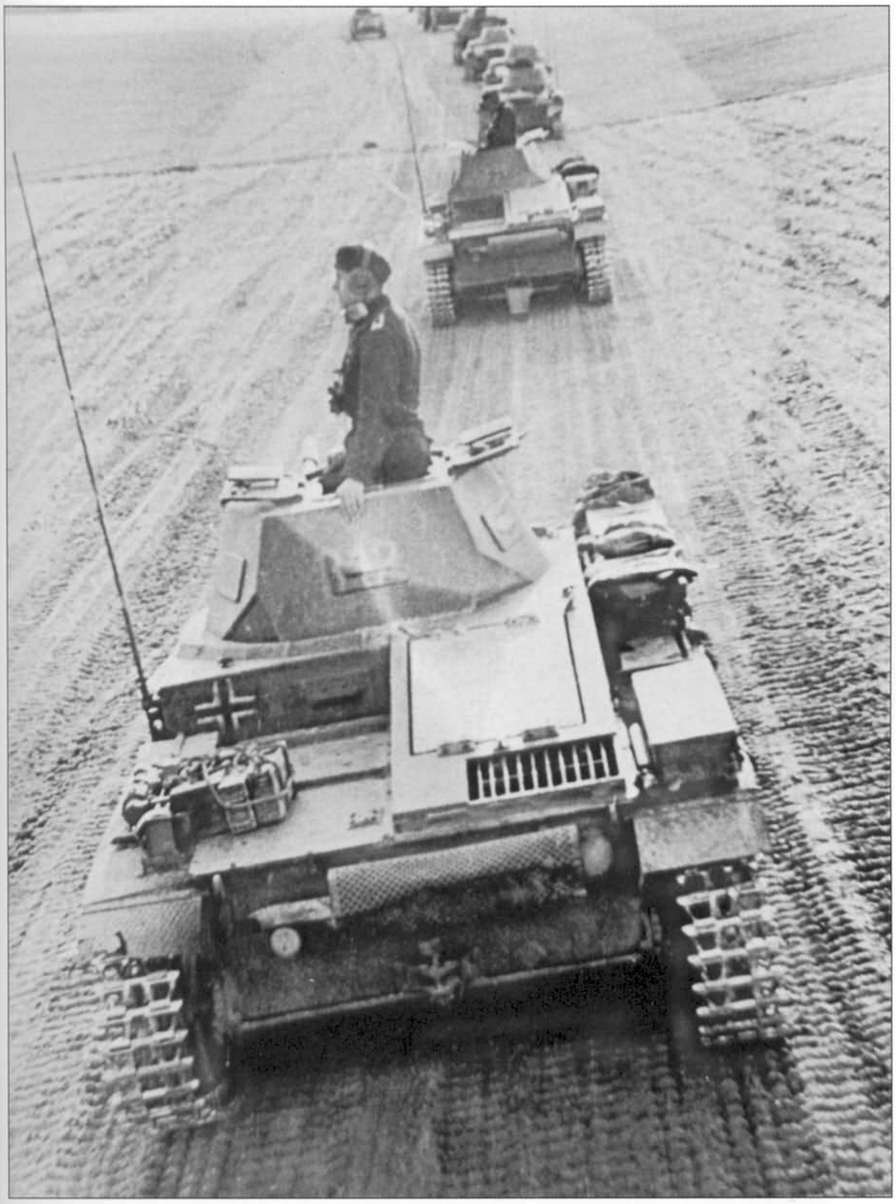
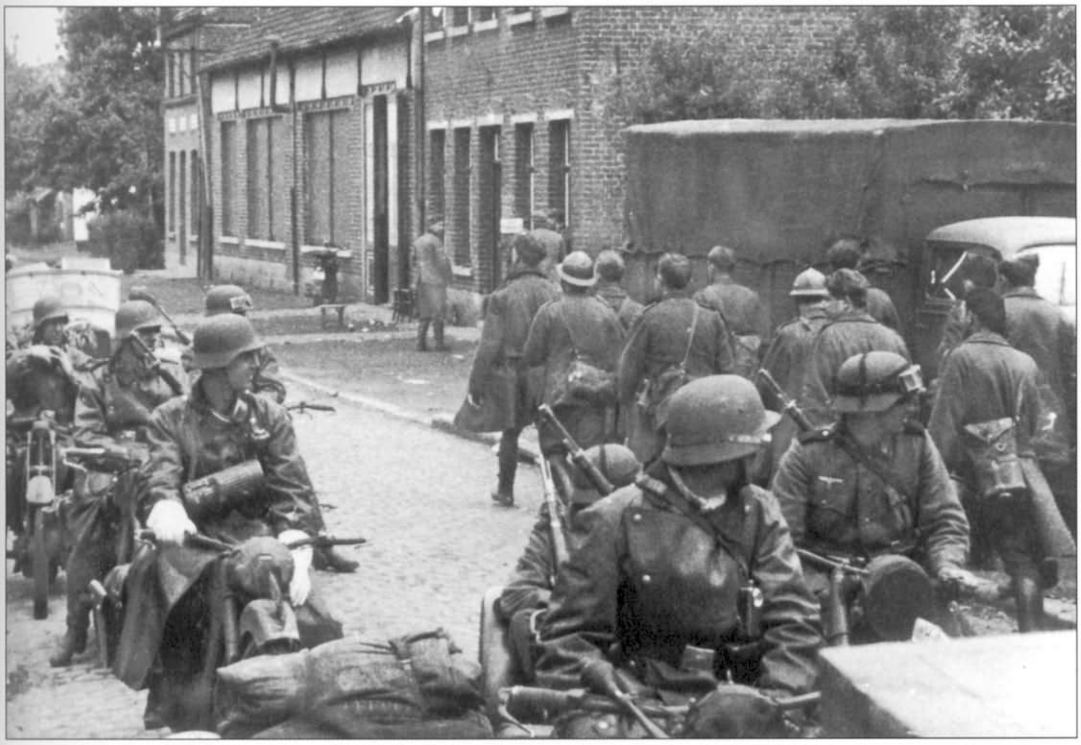
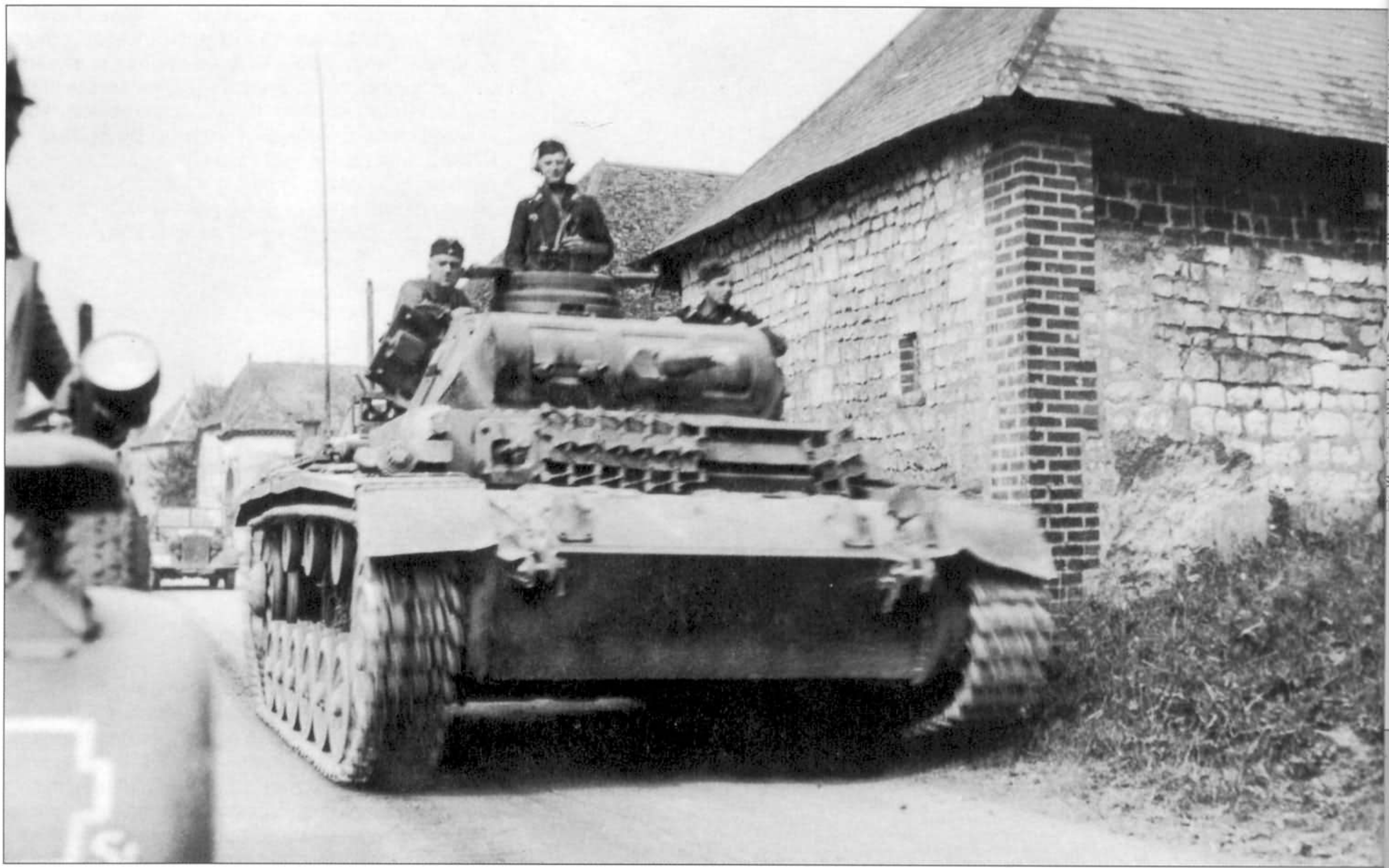


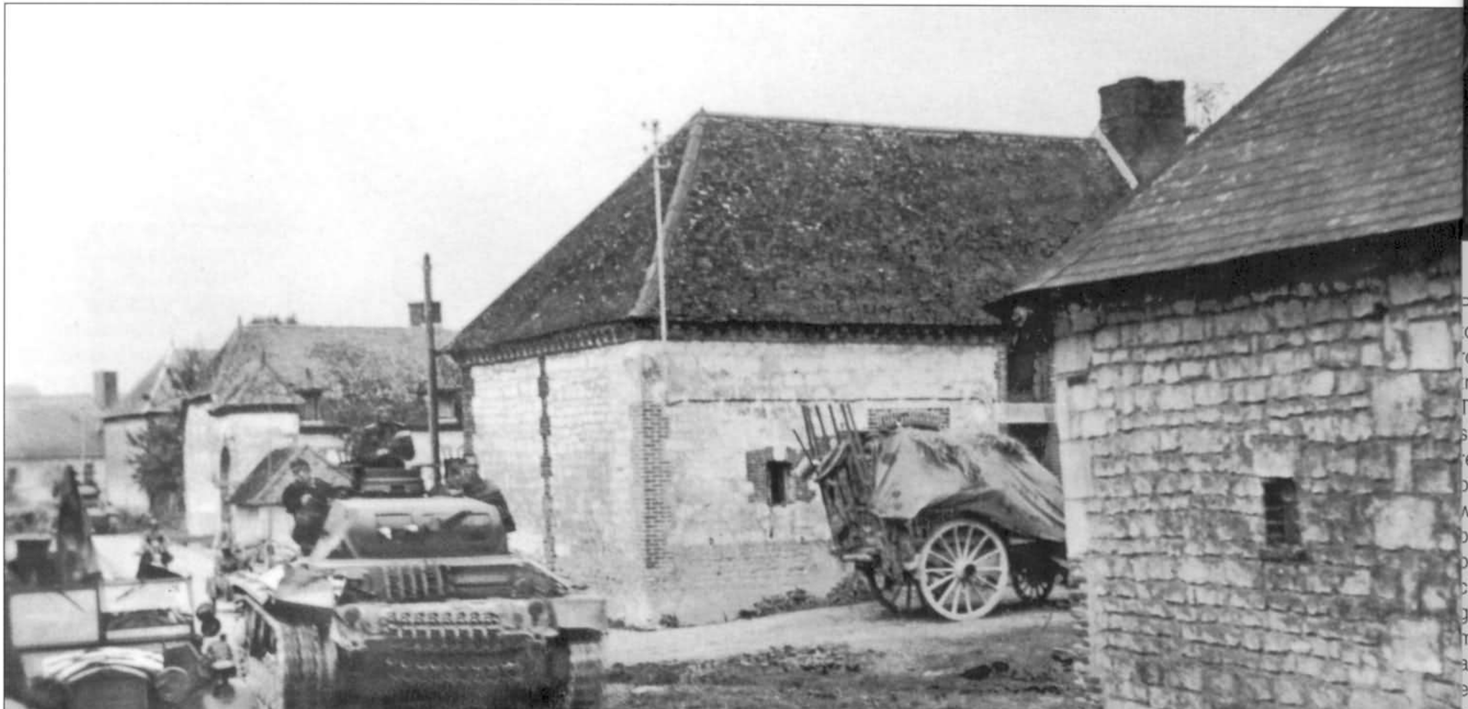
A long column advances across a well-traveled field in May 1940, with two Pz.Kpfw.II following three Pz.Kpfw.I. Barely visible on the turret rear is a yellow tactical number, "312", while the engine access hatch has been painted white. Lashed together with other stowage on the engine deck are a couple of boxes of MG34 ammunition. This photograph is most representative of the Wehrmacht's armored strength, as over half the tanks employed for the battle of France and the Low Countries were Panzer Is and IIs.



A motorcycle unit pauses for a halt while French prisoners walk by. The motorcycles appear to be a mix of BMW R12 and DKW NZ 350, with the rearmost one missing its headlight. Of interest are the light colored gauntlets (gloves) that are being worn by one rider and the absence of the national shield on the side of the M1935 helmets. The nearest soldier has a flashlight attached to the sling of his Kar 98K rifle or a button of his greatcoat.



Two photographs shot in sequence of a column of Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.F followed by a Kfz.15 passing what appears to be an SS signals company equippe with Auto Union Wanderer W 11 passenger cars. Other than the SS license plate and tactical sign, no other markings are visible with the exception of th flag carried on the hood for aerial recognition. SS units were employed with XXIV.Armeekorps in the attack on Holland or held in reserve until mid-May, whe most were transferred south to take part in the assault on France.



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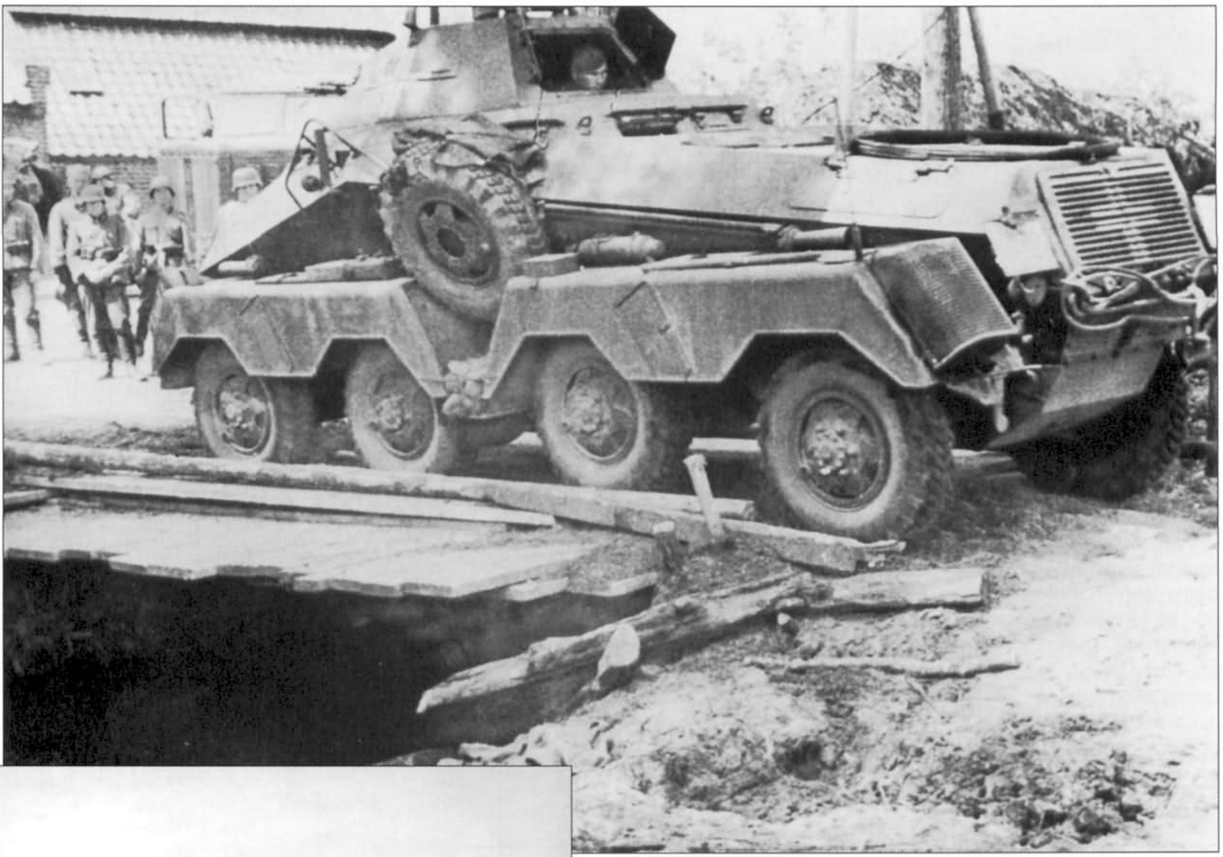
An Sd.Kfz.232 slowly attempts to negotiate a temporary bridge that Pioniers have emplaced over a small brook. Although it appears to be camouflaged, this is invariably the reflection and shadows cast by nearby foliage. Of interest is the aerial recognition rectangle, which appears to extend down the side plates over the engine access door, and the thin white cross on the turret side. The stowage of the spare tire is also uncommon.



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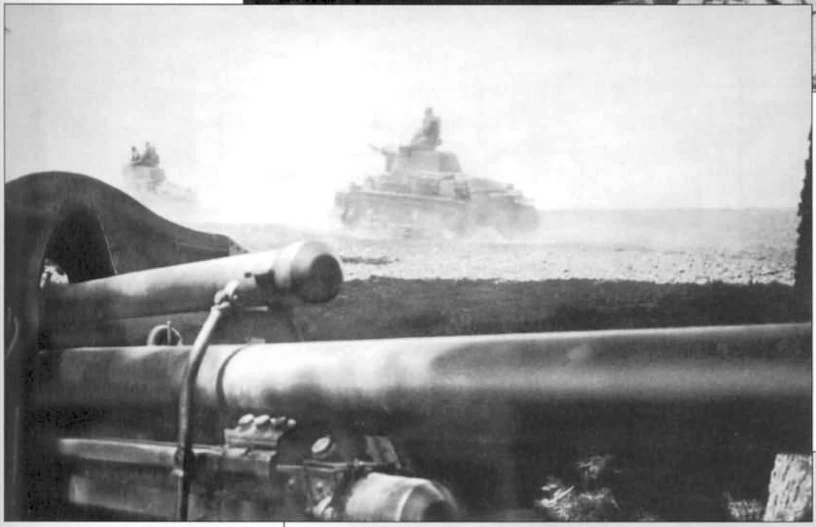
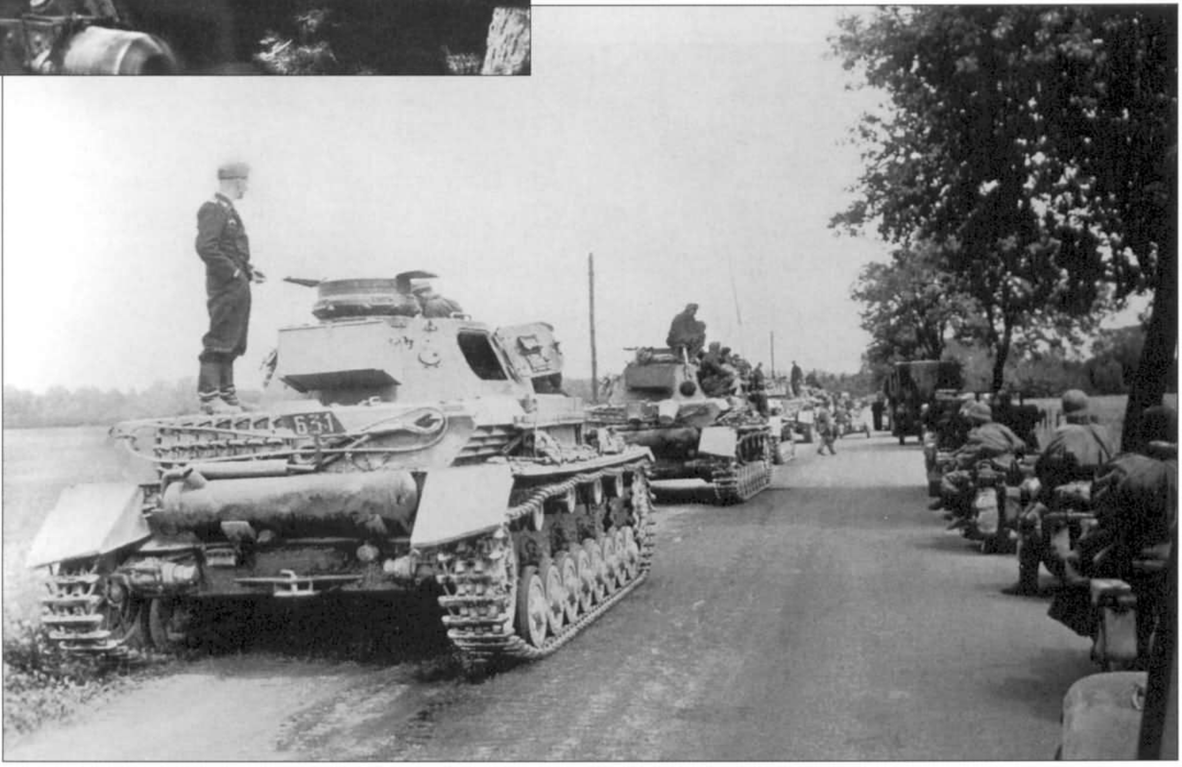
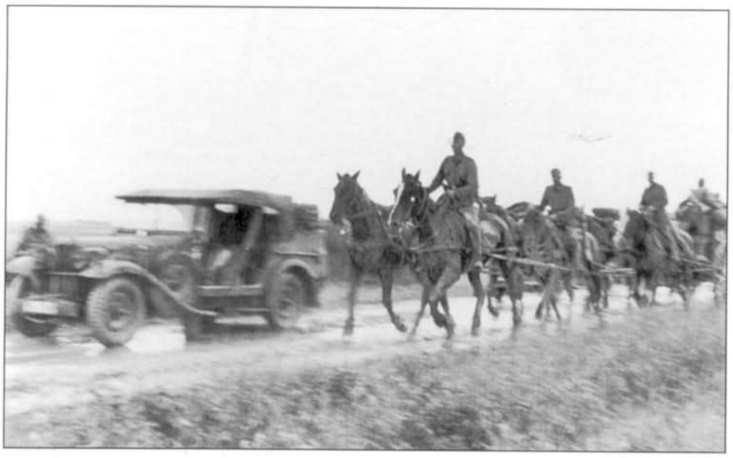


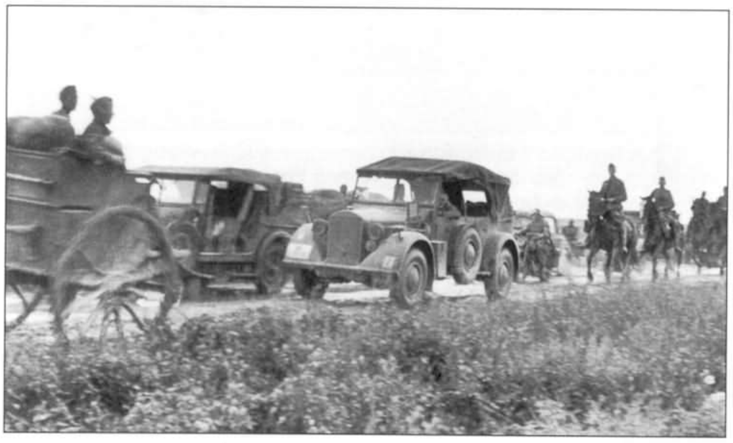
Two Pz.Kpfw.35(t) from 6.Panzer-Division cross a dusty field in front of a 10.5cm leichte Feldhaubitze 18 or leFH 18, which was the standard field gun in the Artillerie-Regiments of both the panzer and infanterie divisions. The Panzer 35(t)s carry the standard load of jerry cans for this campaign, two mounted on edge on the rear of the fender and three laying flat on the engine deck.

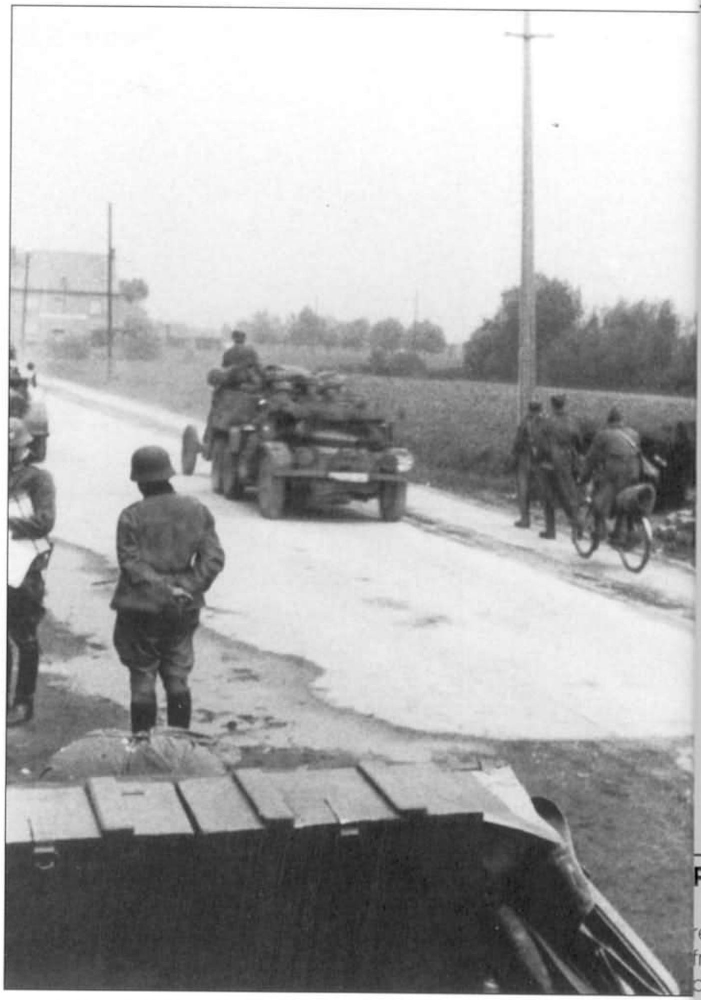
A column of Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.B/C come to a halt on a hard surfaced road beside a column of trucks and motorcyclists. The tanks carry a unique stowage box on the turret rear, obviously fabricated by the unit's workshops, with the second one painted in a dark color, possibly black, and the closest in the same dark gray as the Panzer IV. No markings can be seen on any vehicles with the exception of the white tactical number "631" on a black rhomboid plate of the last tank. There also appears to be a portion of a divisional insignia on the left upper corner beside the tow cable hook, possibly the inverted "Y" of the 5. or 6.Panzer-Division.





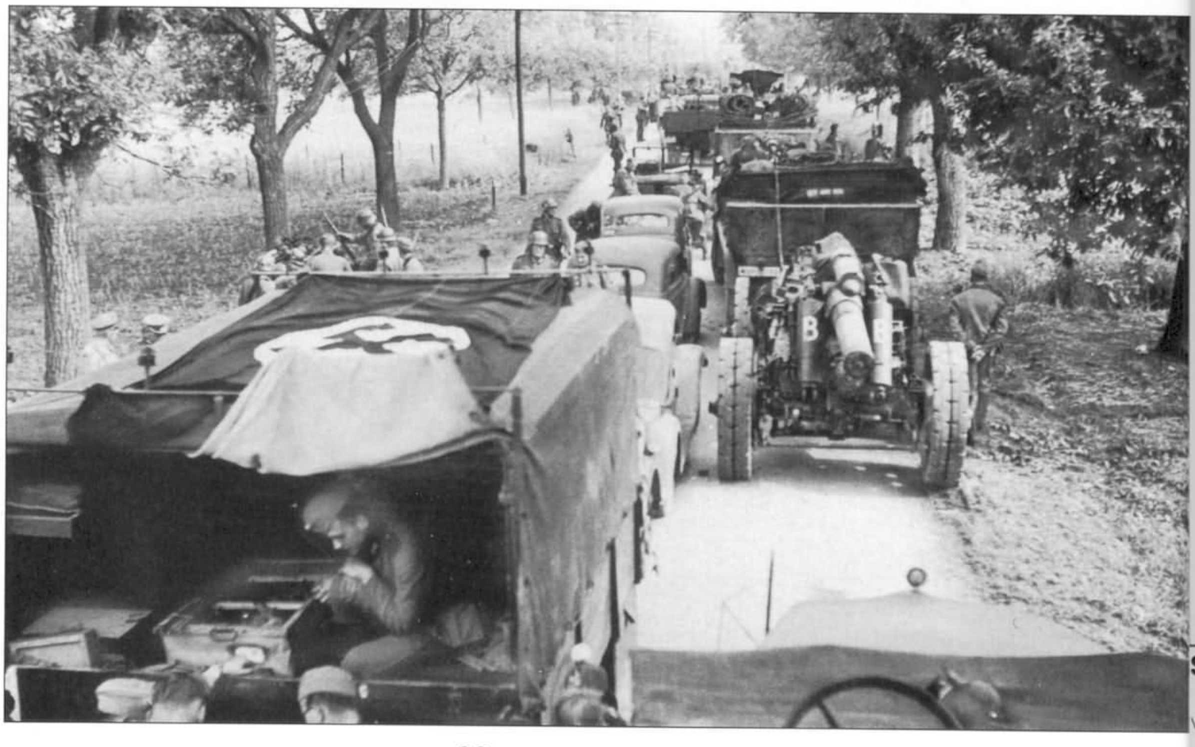
These two photographs were probably taken mere seconds apart as a horse drawn column with a few motor vehicles mixed in passes another motorized column. In the first picture is a relatively rare Stoewer Type M 12, of which only about 600 were built. There were numerous military designations for the "Medium Uniform Pkw." or medium passenger car, depending on their intended use but Kfz.15 seemed to be used as a generic title for all types and manufacturers. In the second photo, the most common version of the Kfz.15, built by Auto Union and Opel, passes the aforementioned Stoewer. It carries the Gruppe Guderian "G" and an unidentified marking on the lower corner of the left fender. It also has a square command pennant, which typically signified a major army level command, and this may be why it is being given the right-of-way!





A Krupp Protze Kfz.69 truck pulling a 3.7cm gun on a road in Franc
This light truck was very common throughout the early battles of WWII a
served a variety of roles, particularly as a prime mover for the 2cm Flak 3
and Pak 35/36 seen here.

Another congested road in France with all manner of cars and trucks trying to move. The unidentified truck in the foreground appears to be equipped as some type of communications or command vehicle. It carries an unusually shaped tarpaulin cover over the rear and has what appear to be antenna arrays at the front and rear. A very large flag ensures that the Luftwaffe makes no mistakes. To the right a 15cm schwere Feldhaubitze (heavy field gun) is being towed by a tracked prime mover. The "B" on each equilibrator designates the individual gun within the battery.



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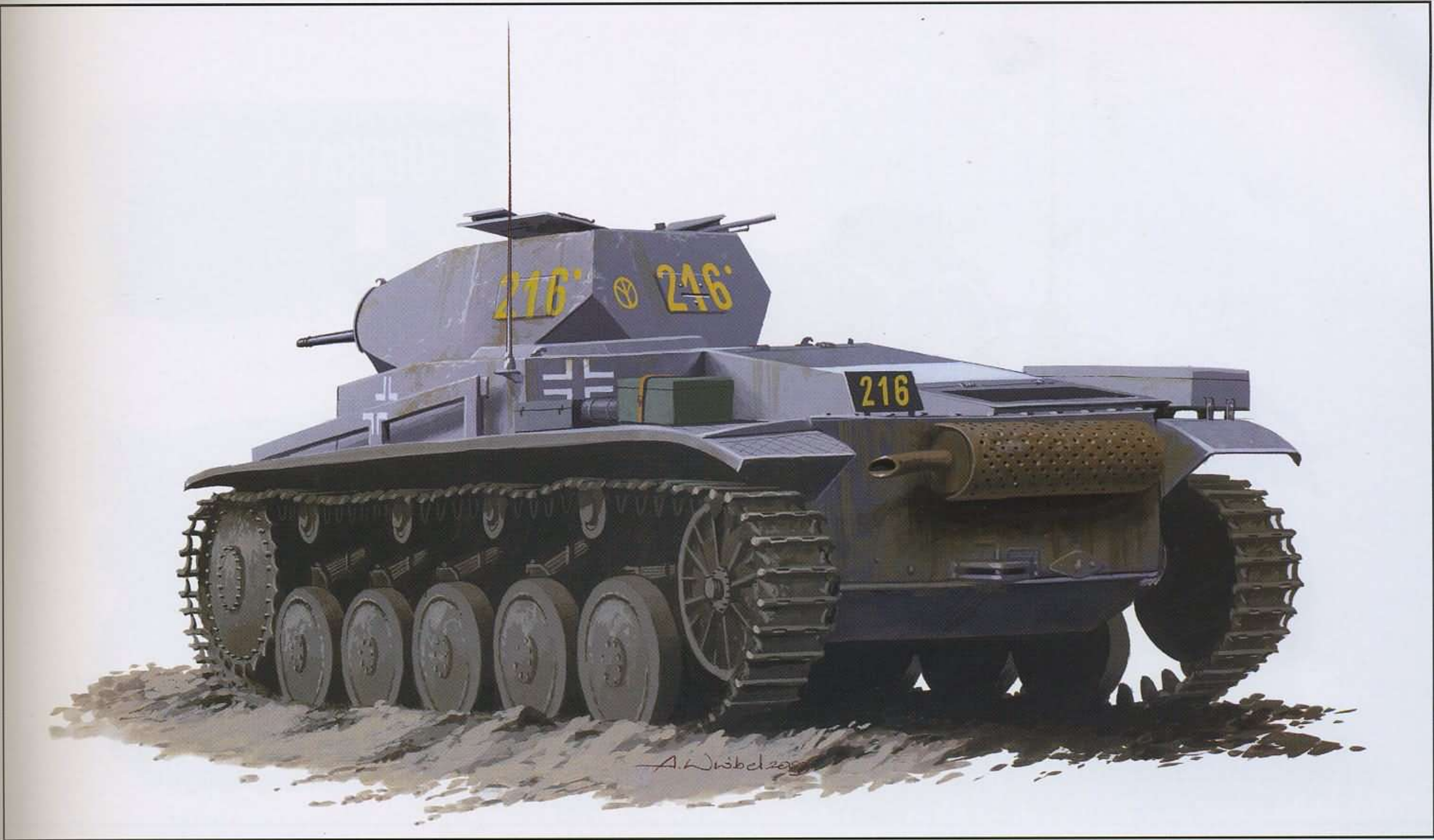
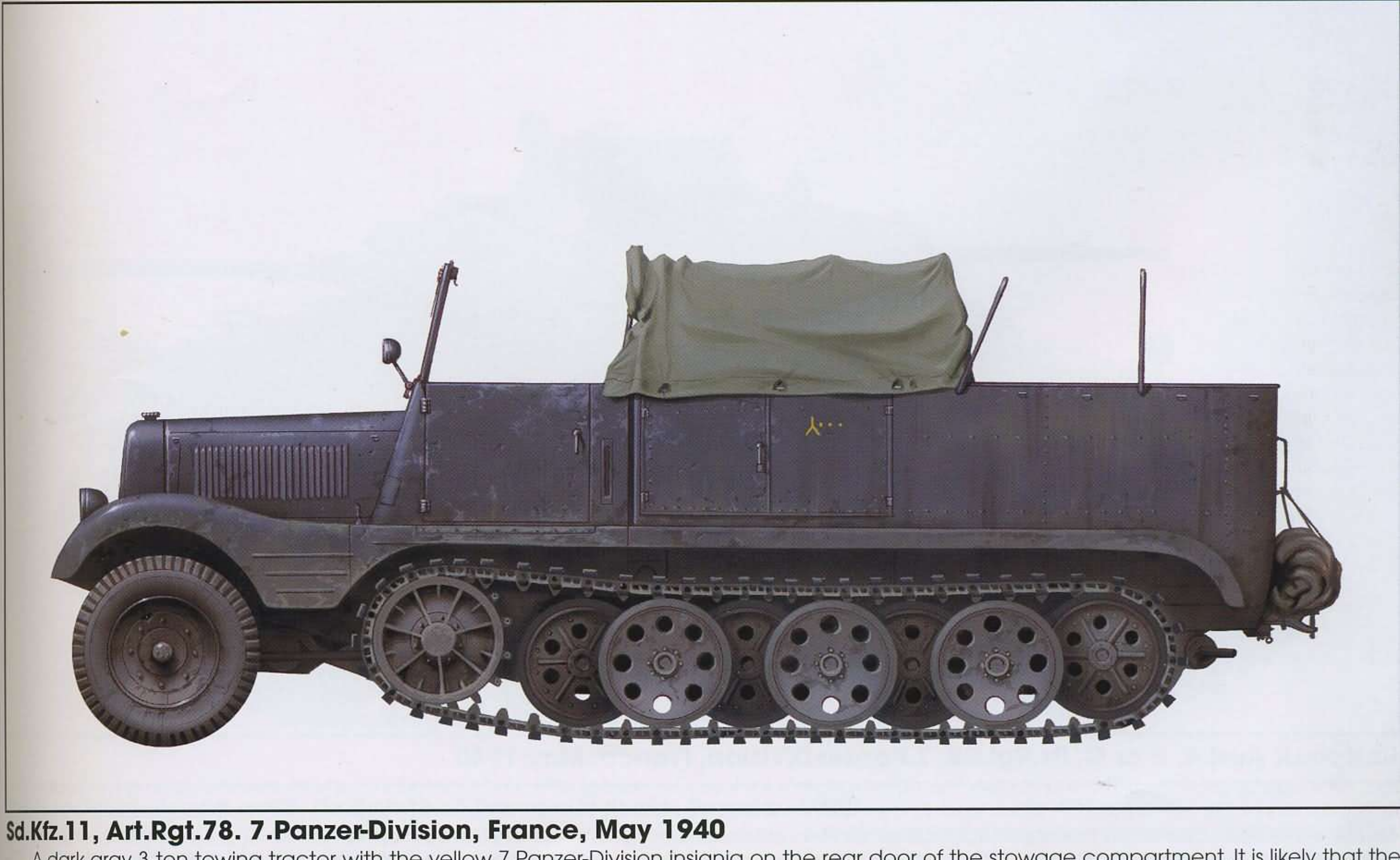


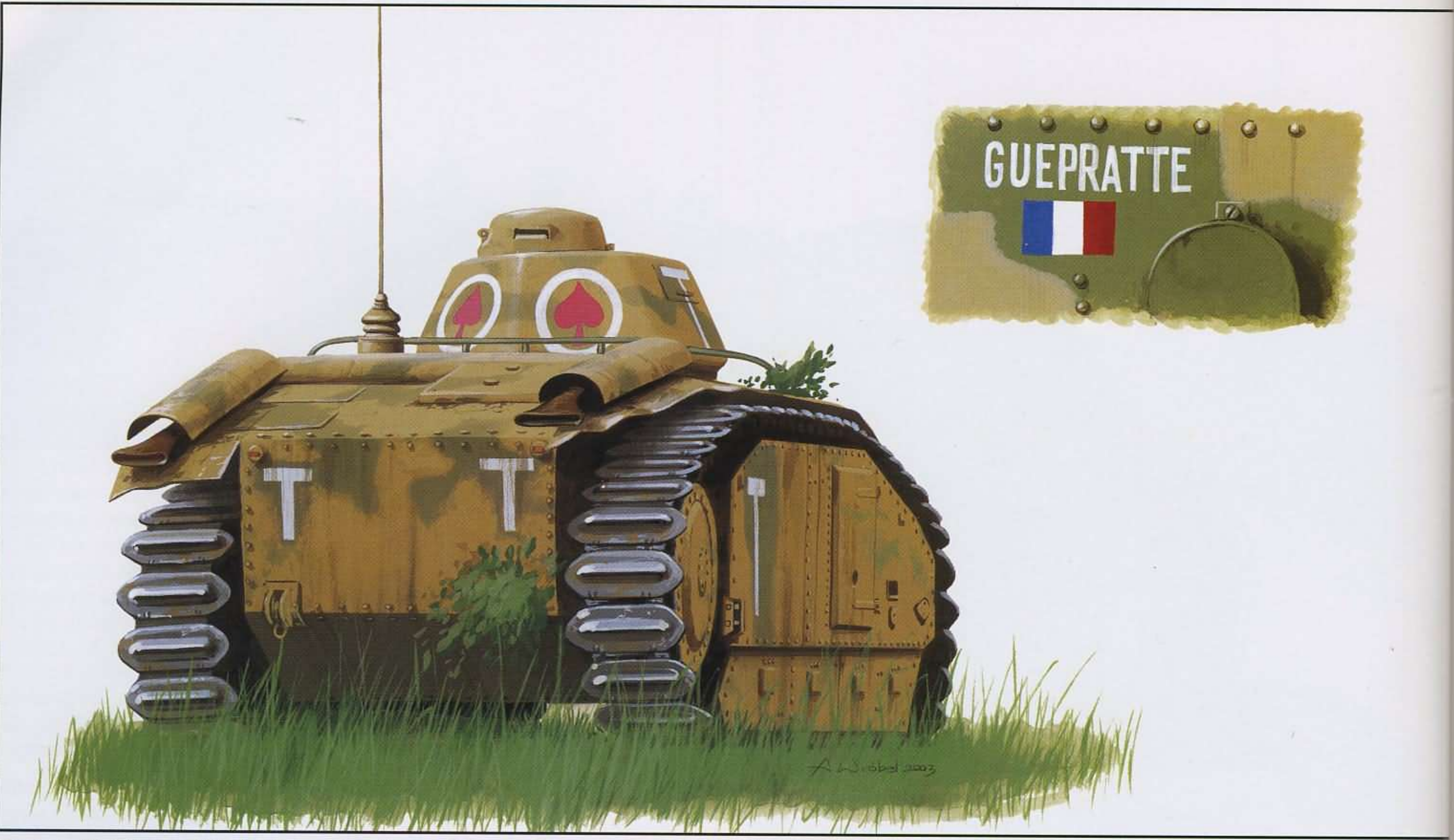
Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf. A, B or C, Pz.Rgt.36, 4.Panzer-Division, France, May 1940

Finished in standard Dunkelgrau RAL 7021, this vehicle displays a full set of markings. The divisional insignia is painted in yellow on the turret rear as is the vehicle number "216" on the turret rear and side. The yellow dot behind the turret number signified the regiment, to differentiate it from the other unit in the division, Pz.Rgt.35. The vehicle number also appears in yellow on the black painted rhomboid mounted on the rear plate. White outline crosses appear on both the side and rear superstructure, and a white air recognition rectangle is prominently displayed on the engine deck.



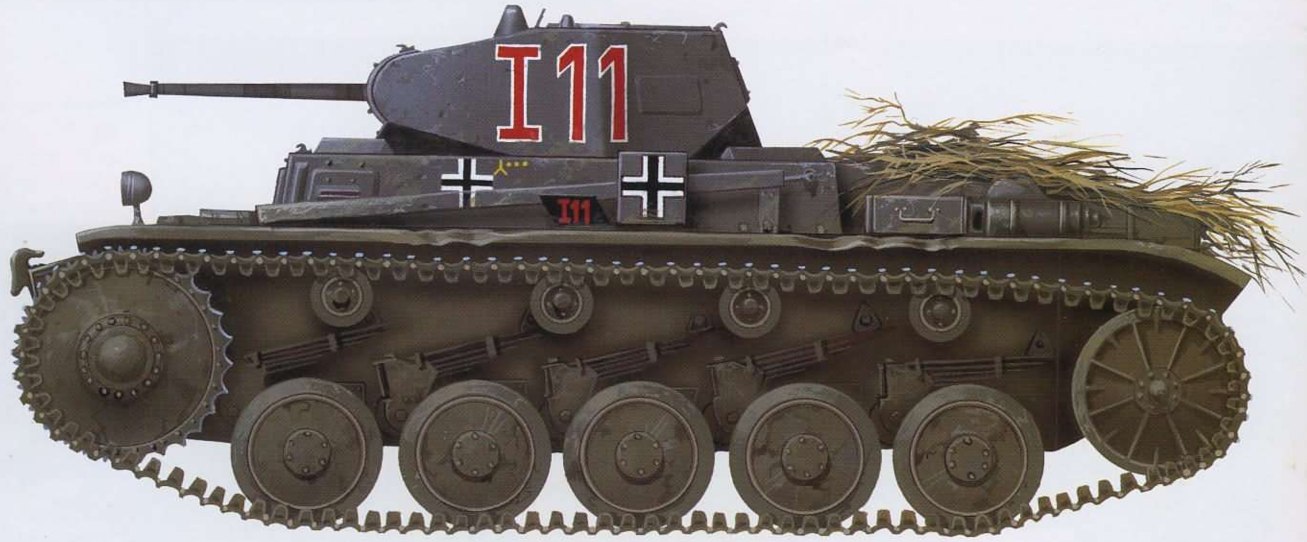
Sd.Kfz.11, Art.Rgt.78. 7.Panzer-Division, France, May 1940

A dark gray 3-ton towing tractor with the yellow 7.Panzer-Division insignia on the rear door of the stowage compartment. It is likely that the vehicle had an artillery tactical symbol and battery number in white on the front and rear, along with standard Wehrmacht license plates.



Renault Char B1bis, 1er Section, 3ème Compagnie, 37ème BCC, May 1940

The 37e BCC Char B1s were some of the most elaborately marked vehicles of the campaign. "Gueppratte" displays a red spade for the 1s Section, within a white circle for the 3rd Company, on both rear turret sides. The white section letter "T" is painted on both sides of the rear hu plate, turret and hull. The vehicle name appears in white on the forward turret sides as well as the front hull, with the French national tricolo painted below. The camouflage pattern of olive green and ochre is speculative and it is possible that some of the B1s in 37e BCC were painte solid olive green.



Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf.A, B or C, Pz.Rgt.25, 7.Panzer-Division, France, May 1940

Although unconfirmed, this is probably the commander's tank of I.Abteilung, with "I11" painted in red with a white outline, typical for mos of the tanks in 7.Panzer- Division. A black and white national cross appears on the hull side, followed by the divisional insignia in yellow. Simila crosses were also applied on the upper right corner of the turret rear and left corner of the rear superstructure. The black painted rhomboi plate is still mounted on the fender with the tactical number uncommonly applied in a dark color, probably red. An additional cross with a thi black outline has been painted on a sheet metal plate attached to the antenna trough.

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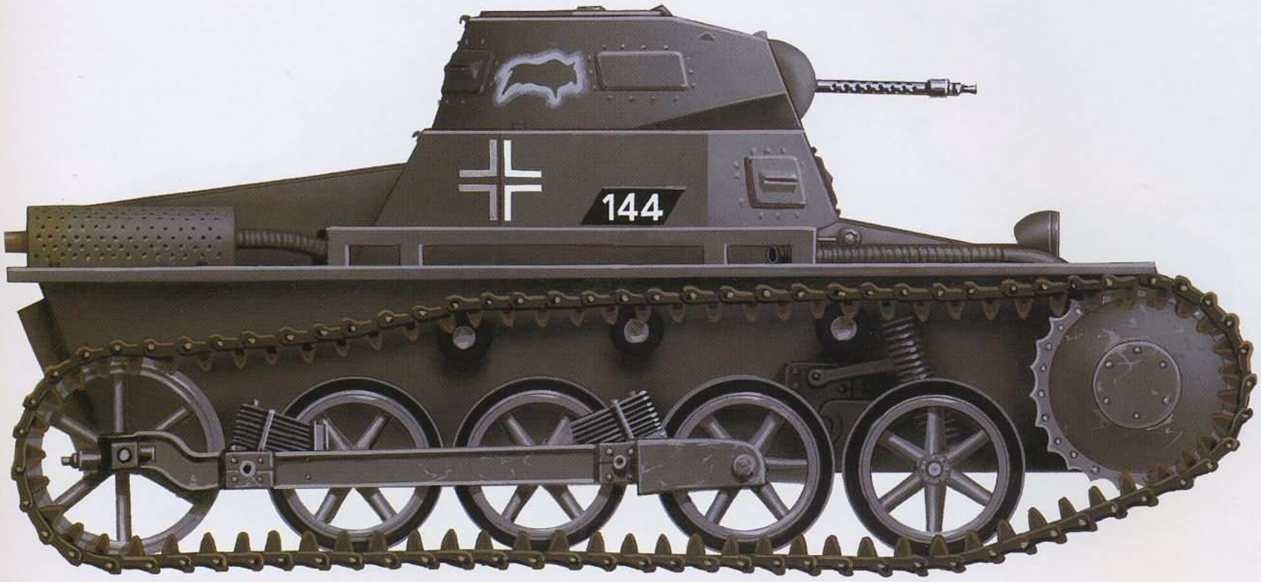
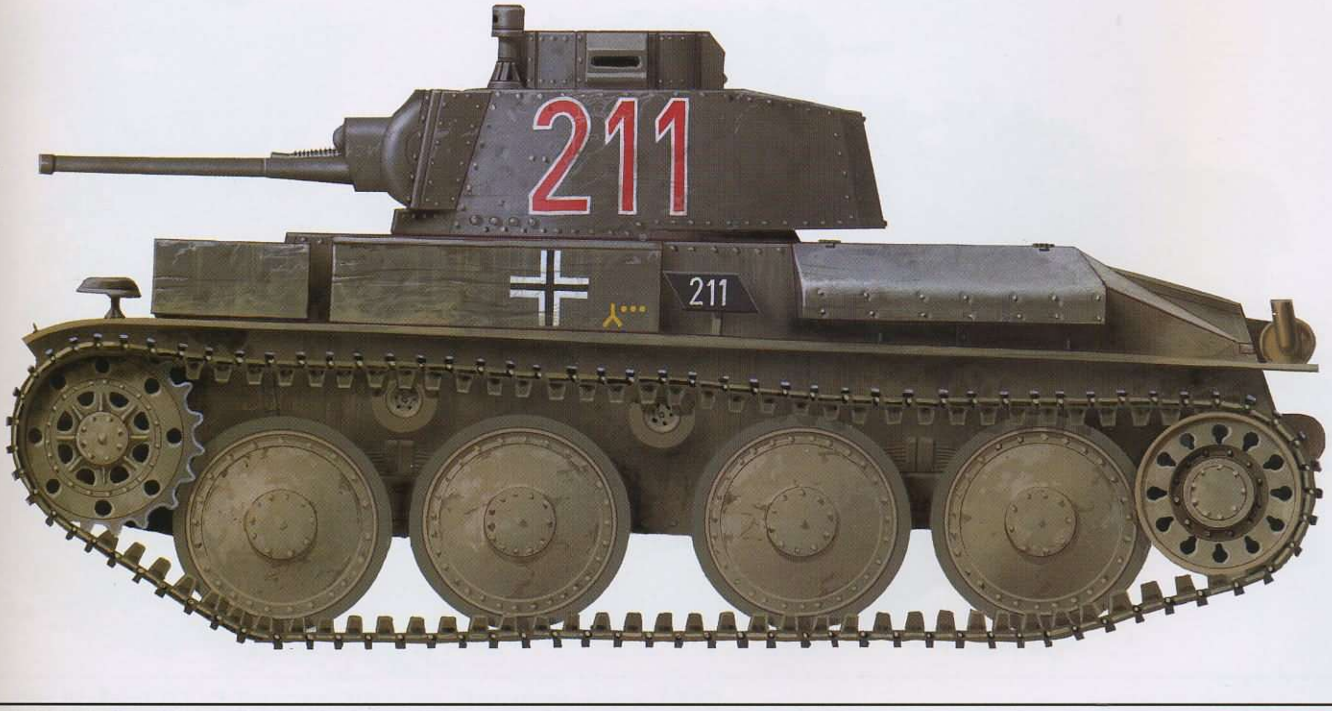


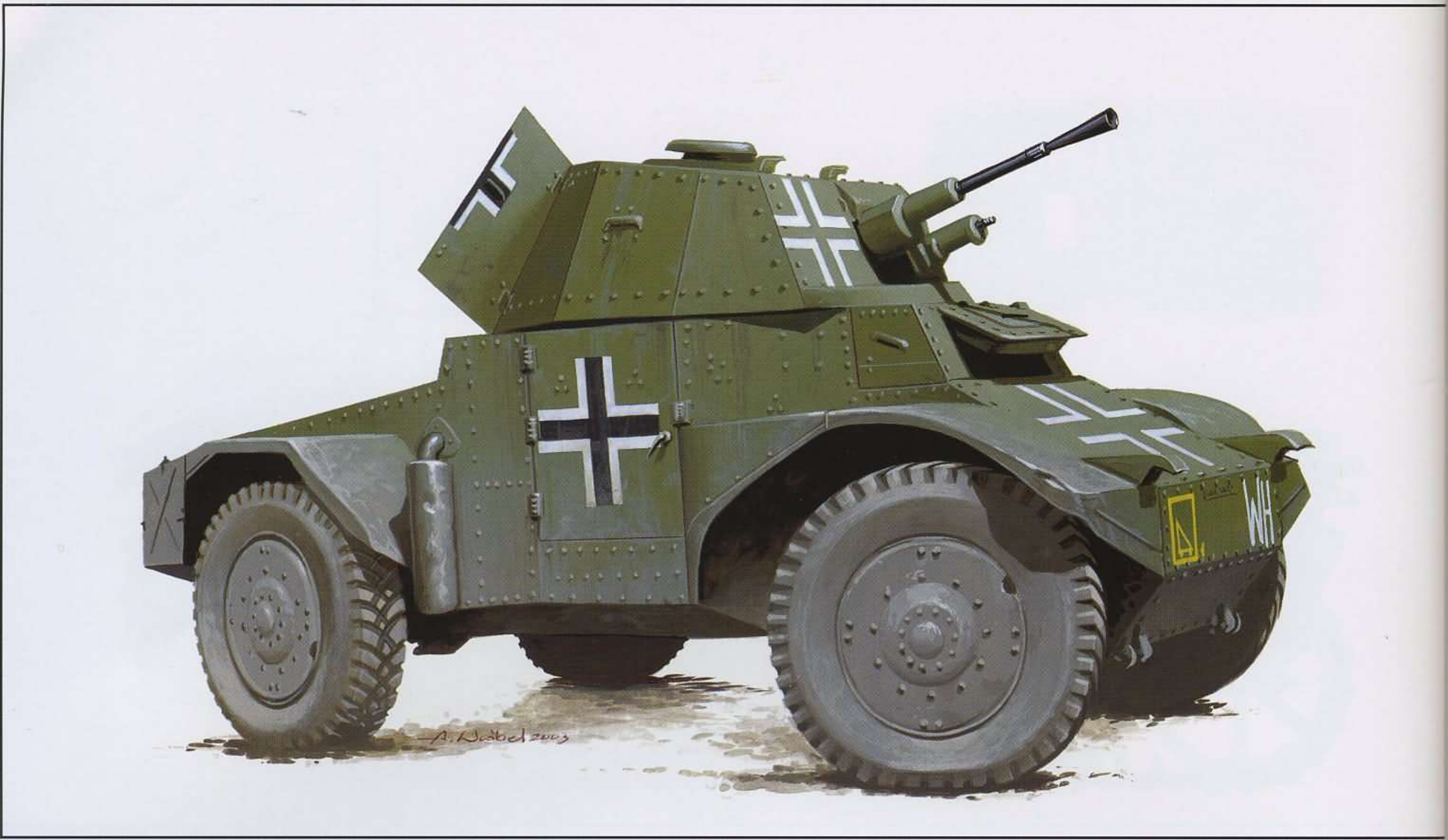
Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.A, Pz.Rgt.7, 10.Panzer-Division, France, 1940

This dark gray Panzerkampfwagen I has the familiar Panzer-Regiment 7 bison insignia on its turret side, sprayed through a stencil with light blue-gray paint. On the hull side is a white outline cross that has been uniquely applied at the joint in the superstructure, invariably to ensure it is not obscured by the black painted rhomboid mounted on the fender, with the tactical number "144" in white.



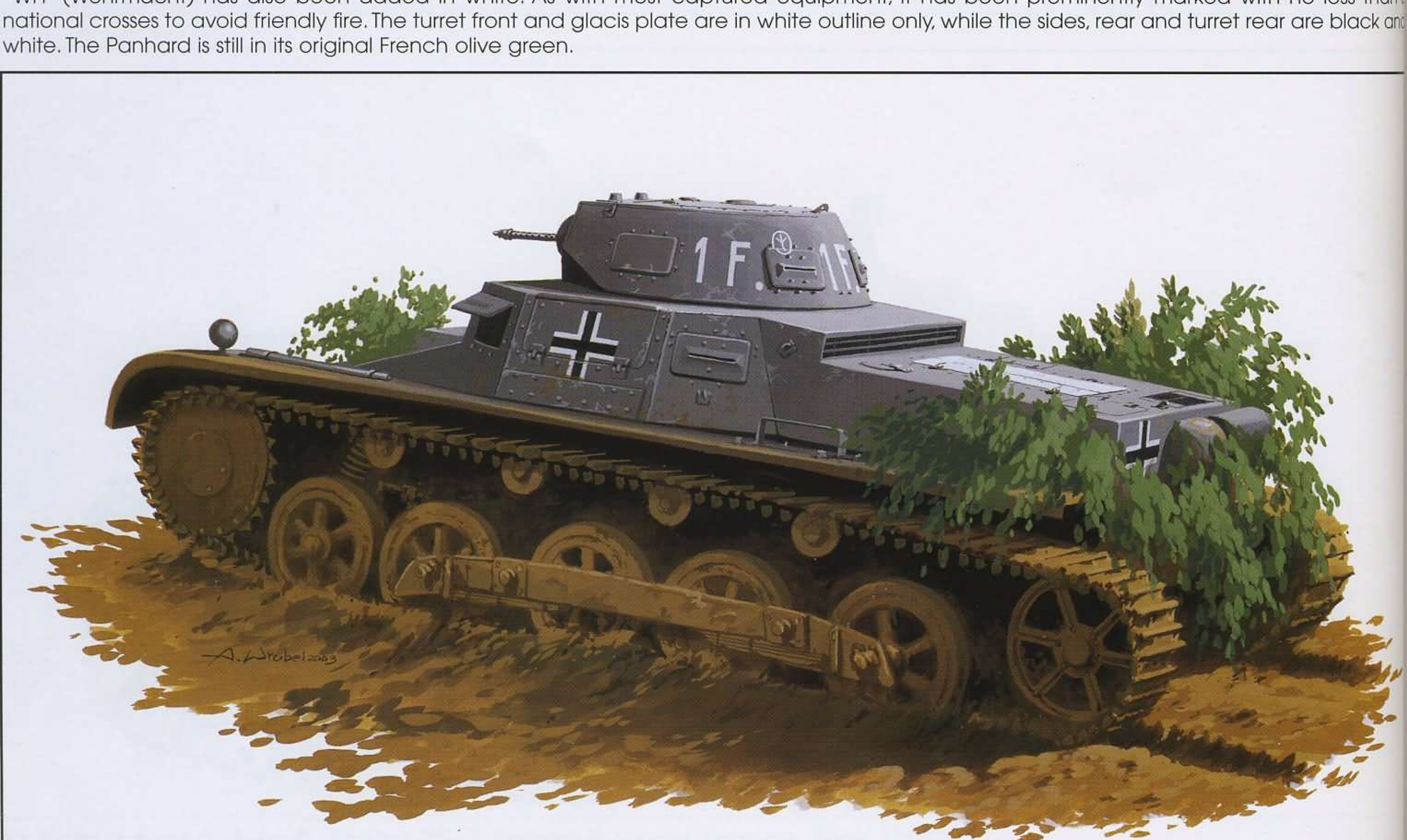
Pz.Kpfw.38(t) Ausf.B or C, Pz.Rgt.25, 7.Panzer-Division, France, 1940

Another 7.Panzer-Division vehicle, this tank displays the typical style of red and white turret number seen on most of the 38(t)s in this unit. The tactical number is repeated in white on the black rhomboid plate attached to the fender. Two additional stowage bins have been mounted on the fender, with a thin black and white national cross and yellow divisional marking painted on the rearmost one.



AMD 35 Panhard 178, Pz.Jäg.Abt.5, France, June 1940

Based on the tactical marking, this captured armored car was being used by the first company of a towed anti-tank gun unit, possibl Panzerjäger Abteilung 5. The tactical marking appears to be painted in yellow on both sides of the rear plate and to the right on the front plate "WH" (Wehrmacht) has also been added in white. As with most captured equipment, it has been prominently marked with no less than national crosses to avoid friendly fire. The turret front and glacis plate are in white outline only, while the sides, rear and turret rear are black and white. The Panhard is still in its original French olive green.



Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.B, Pz.Rgt.36, 4.Panzer-Division, France, 1940

This Panzer I has been assigned to a Propaganda Kompanie film crew attached to Panzer-Regiment 36. The divisional insignia and regimental "dot" appear on the turret with the code "1F", likely indicating 1st film crew vehicle. A white air recognition rectangle is painted o the engine deck. The existence and position of the national cross on the hull side is speculative based on other 4.Panzer-Division vehicles.

Sd.Kfz.223

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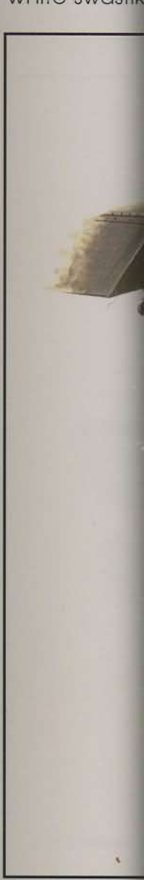

Pz.Bef.Wg

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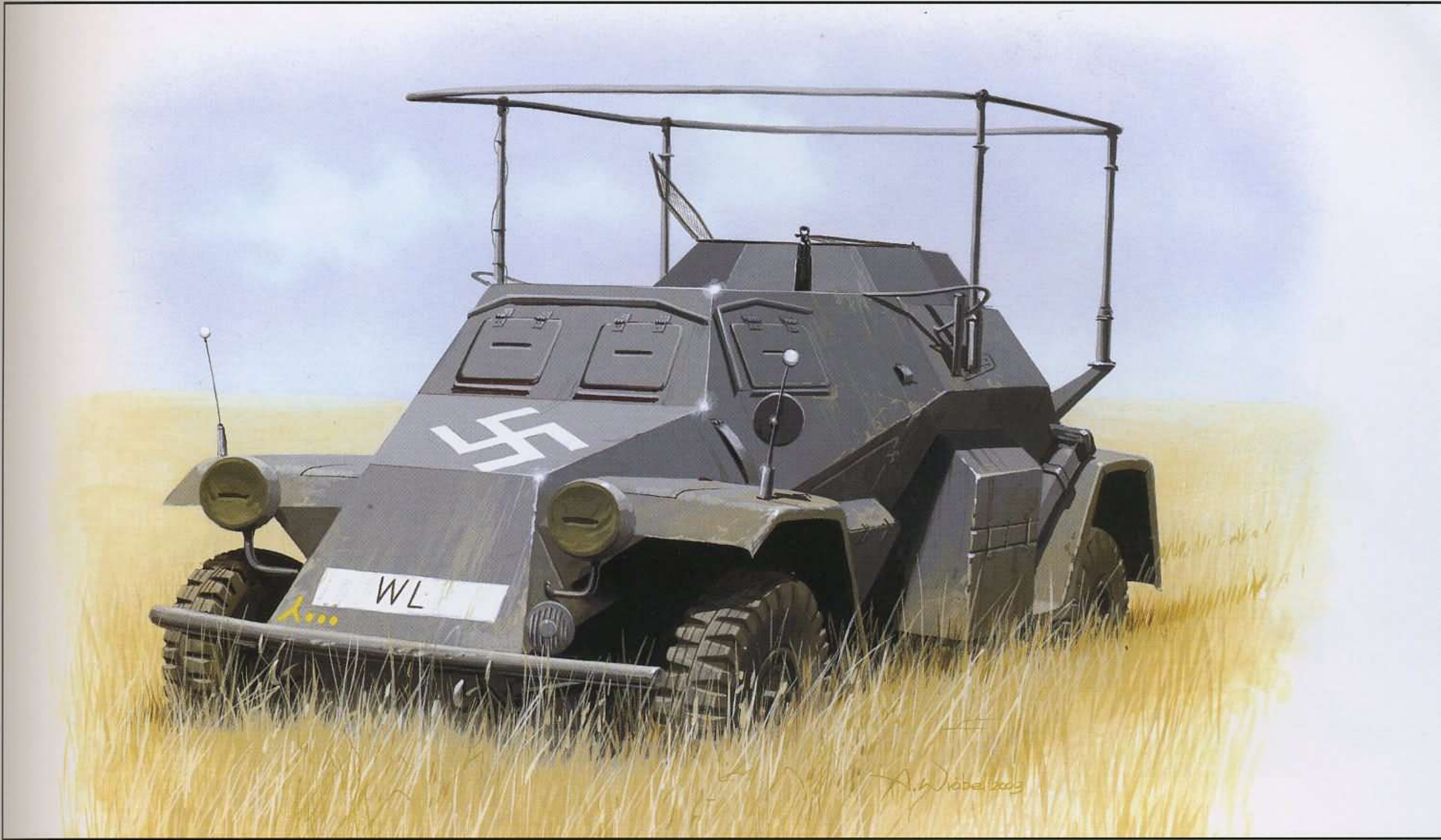
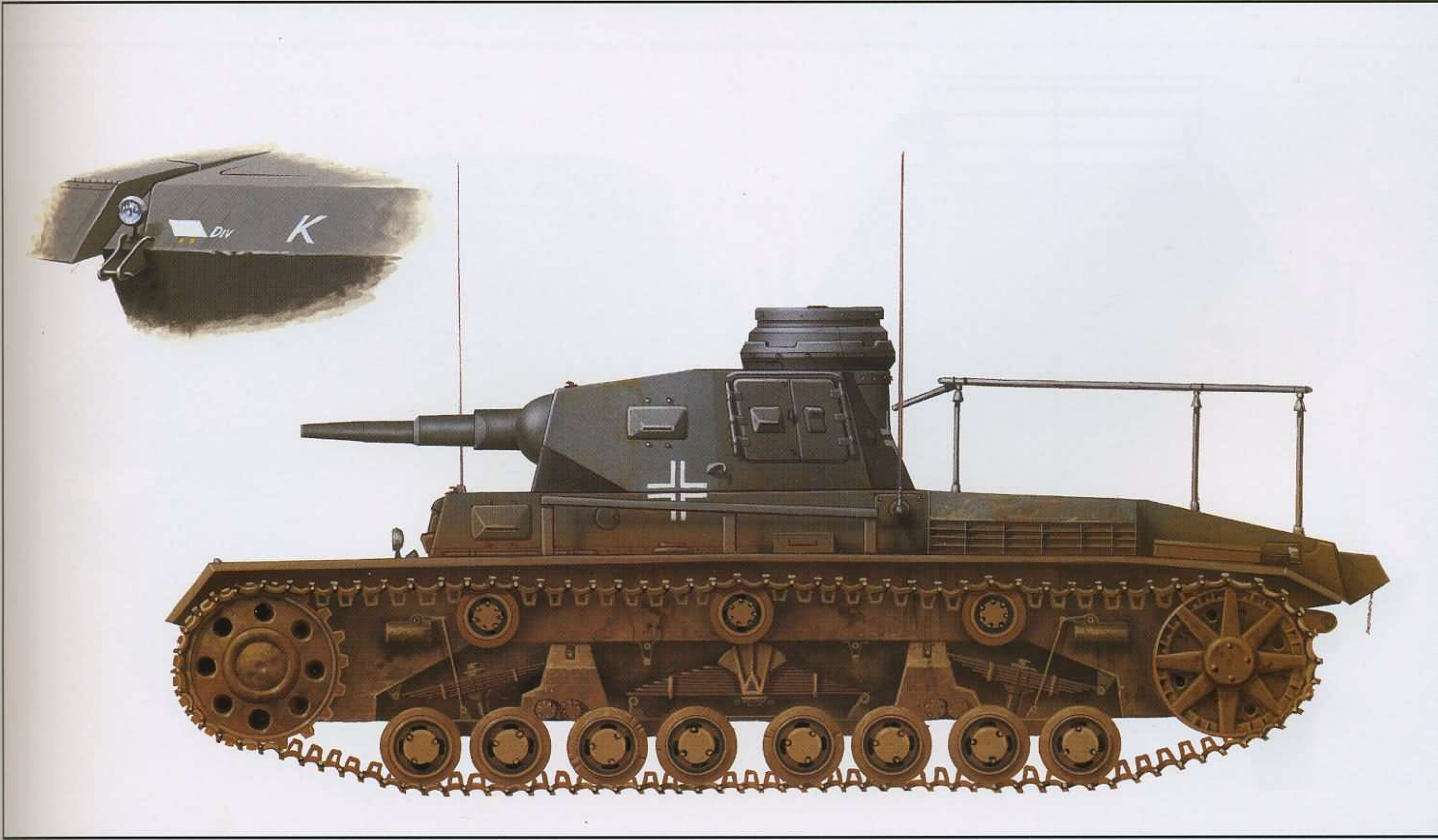


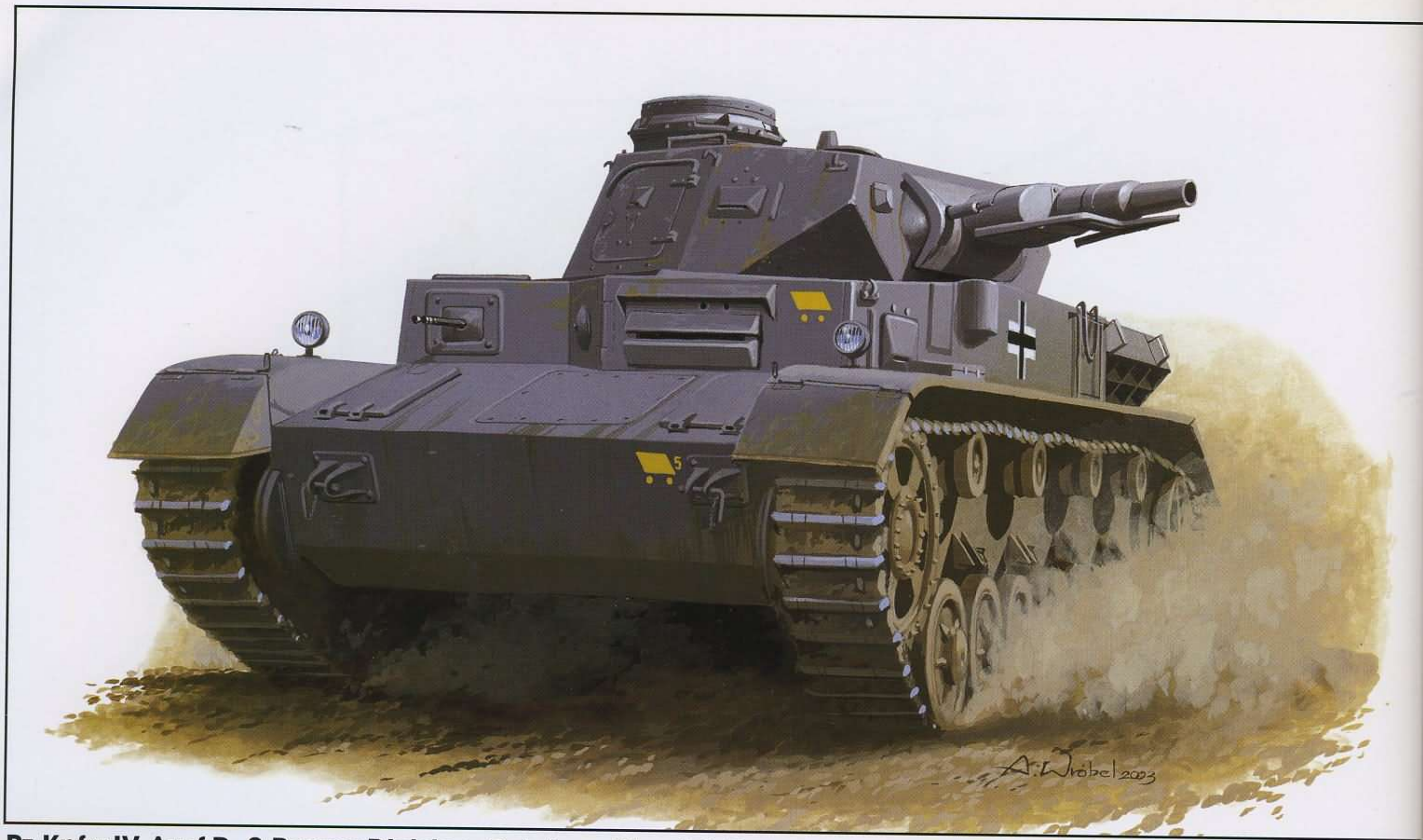
Sd.Kfz.223, assigned to 7.Panzer-Division, France, 1940

This dark gray Sd.Kfz.223 is a Luftwaffe vehicle being used by an aircraft communications officer assigned to the 7.Panzer-Division. A standard white license plate has been applied with only "WL" in black and no number. The yellow divisional sign is below it and a prominen white swastika has been painted on the glacis plate for aerial recognition.



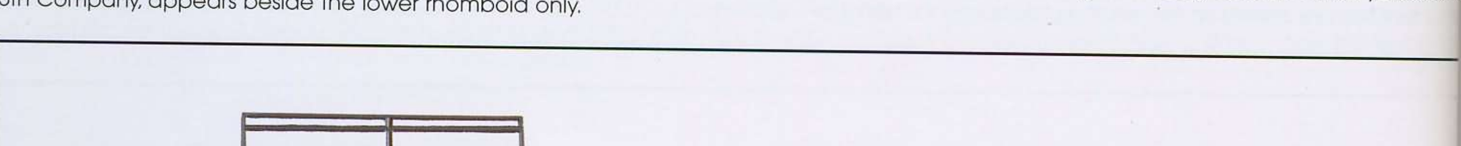
Pz.Bef.Wg.III Ausf.D1, 2.Panzer-Division, Belgium, May 1940

This rare Panzerbefehlswagen III Ausf.D1 is part of the divisional headquarters as indicated by the "Div" notation next to the panze rhomboid, both in white. The divisional insignia of two yellow dots is below it and as part of Gruppe von Kleist, a white "K" has also been applied White outline crosses appear on the side and turret rear. Interestingly, since the turret was fixed in place, the cross has been split between turre and hull.



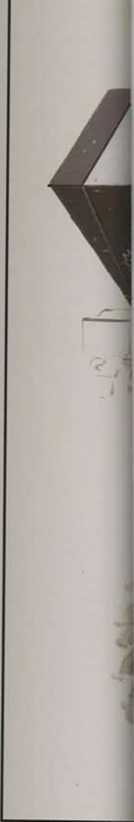
Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.D, 2.Panzer-Division, Belgium, May 1940

Another 2.Panzer-Division vehicle during the first days of the invasion. It is in typical overall dark gray, with a black and white national cros on the hull side. Yellow rhomboids appear on the upper glacis and lower hull plate with the division insignia directly below. A small yellow 5, fo 5th Company, appears beside the lower rhomboid only.



Sd.Kfz.263, 1.Panzer-Division, France 1940

This armored radio car displays the divisional oak leaf emblem inside the tactical symbol for a signals unit. The exact meaning of the "1" i unknown, and could signify Pz.Rgt.1 or perhaps Abteilung 1 in either of the regiments. White outline national crosses are painted on the uppe superstructure sides, engine deck access doors and rear ventilation flaps. A sheet metal plate has been attached to the muffler guard with a unidentified marking and standard license plates are mounted on both sides, typical for armored cars.



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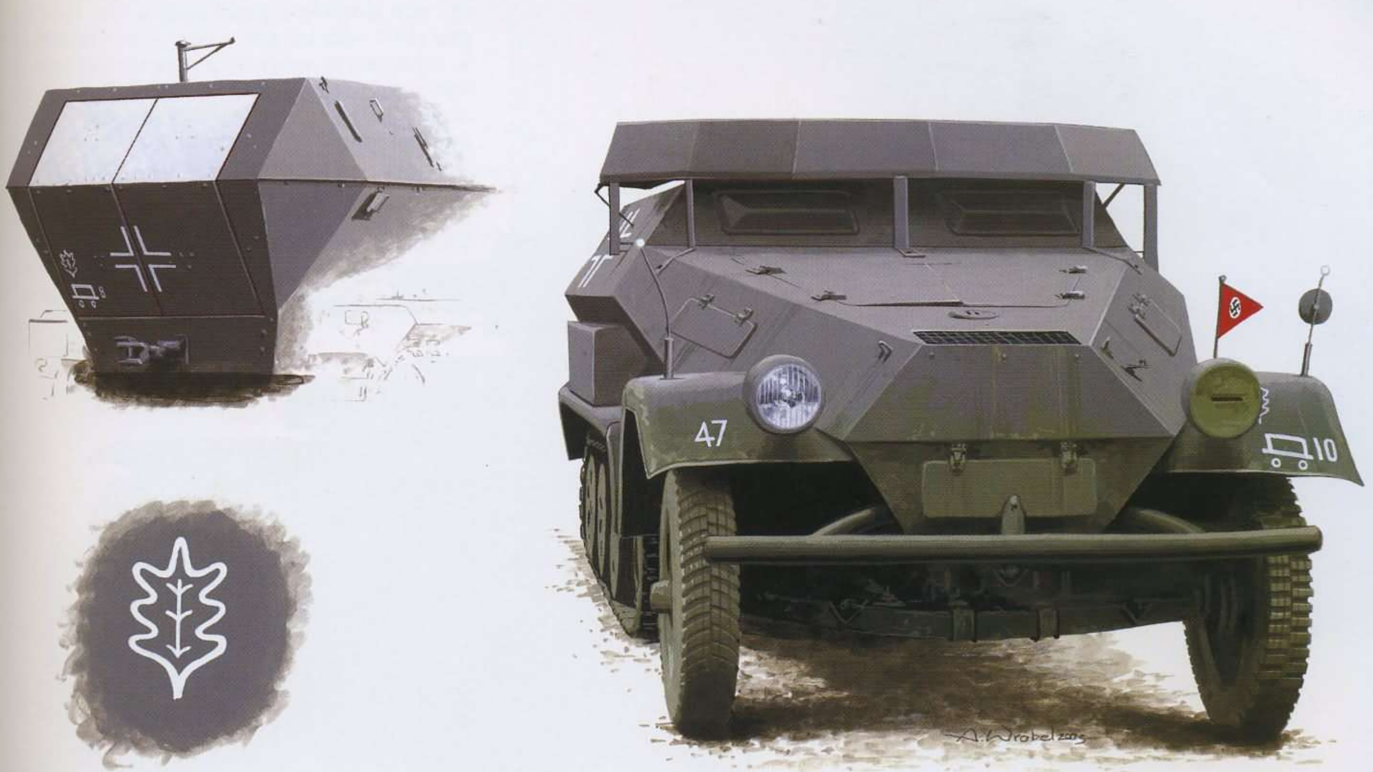
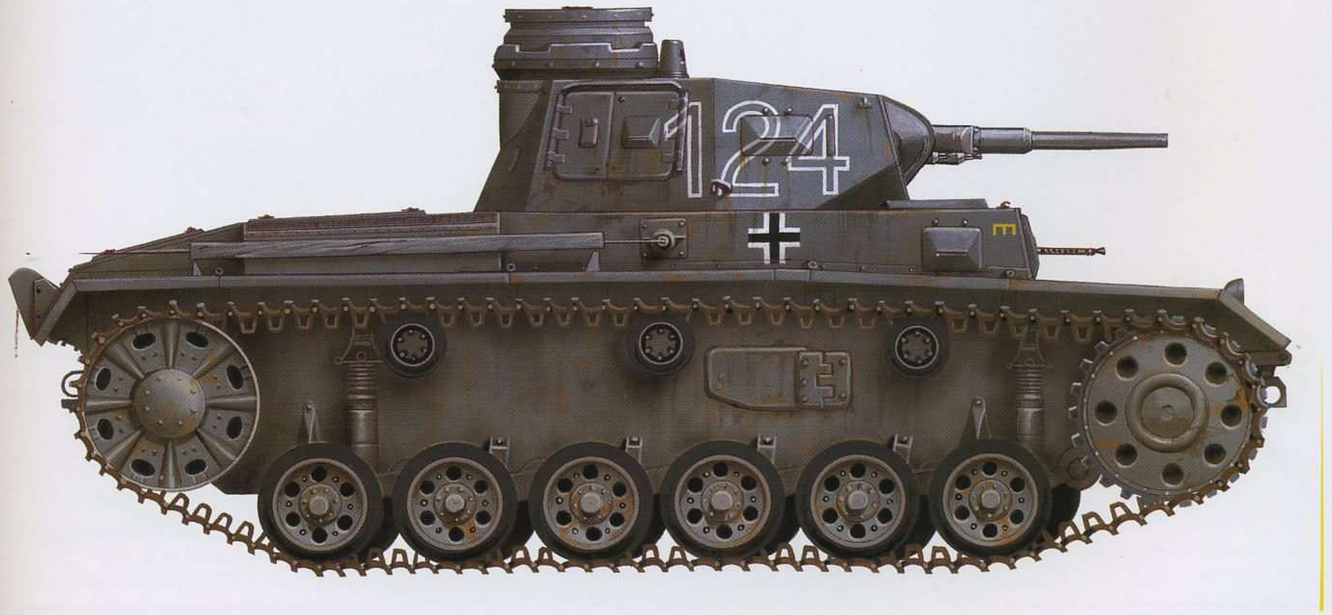


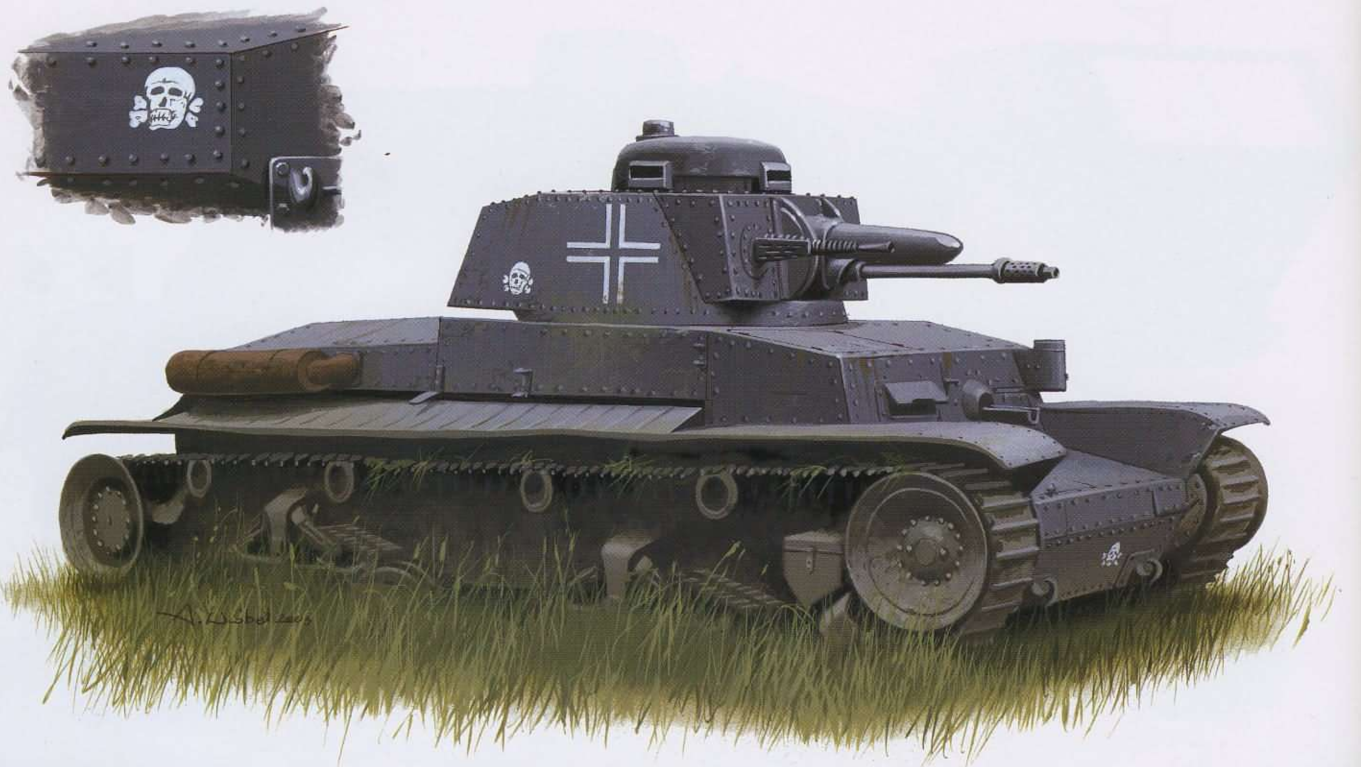
Sd.Kfz.251/18 Ausf.B, Schützen-Regiment 1,1.Panzer-Division, France 1940

This command halftrack is from 10.Kompanie as evidenced by the numeral "10" next to the tactical insignia for motorized infantry. The 1.Panzer-Division oakleaf appears above and a command pennant is mounted as well. On the opposite fender is the number "47", which may be an individual vehicle tactical number as other halftracks in the unit displayed different numbers. All markings are in white. The rear view is of a halftrack from 8.Kompanie and is representative of the rear markings that were generally carried by many Sd.Kfz.251 in Schützen-Regiment 1. The top half of the doors have been painted white for aerial recognition.



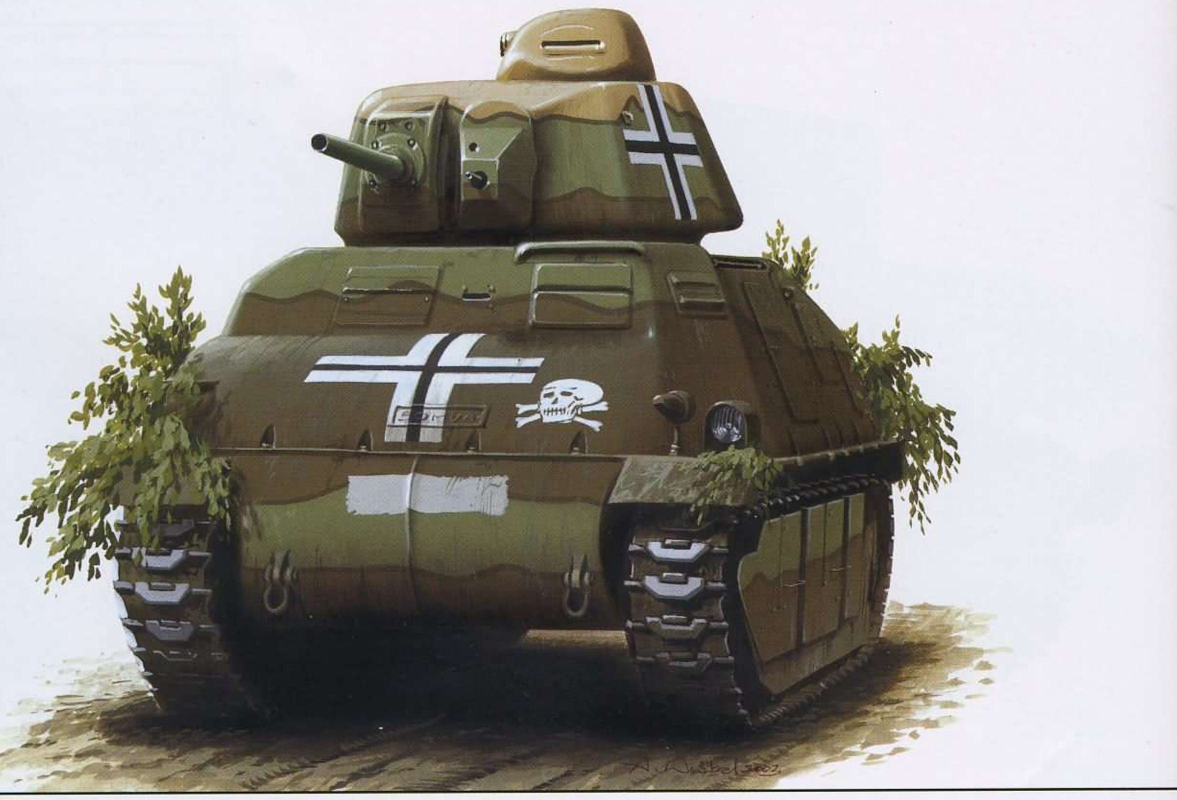
Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.F, 3.Panzer-Division, France, May 1940

3.Panzer-Division Pz.Kpfw.III and IV typically had large tactical numbers in white outline on the turret sides and rear. This Panzer III has the divisional emblem, a sideways "E", painted in yellow at the front edge of the side hull plate. A prominent black and white national cross has also been applied.



z.Kpfw.35(t), Aufkl.Abt., SS-Totenkopf-Division, France, May 1940

Although not an armored division, Totenkopf's reconnaissance battalion (official designation 3.(s)/SS-T.-AA) was equipped with six 35(t) c rmored cars were not available and the division already had a preponderance of Czech weapons. The dark gray tanks were simply marke vith thin white outline national crosses and the divisional emblem on the turret sides. The "Death's Head" insignia also appeared on the low ont and rear hull plates. All six tanks were lost by the end of May.



Somua S 35, Aufkl.Abt., SS-Totenkopf-Division, France, May 1940

At least one captured French Somua was used by Totenkopf to replace lost Pz.Kpfw.35(t). Prominent national crosses were applied to th hull front and turret sides, with the glacis plate cross having different lengths of horizontal legs. The divisional emblem was painted on the glac much larger than those applied to the Czech tanks. The French serial number has been painted over on the hull front, presumably with the sam white paint used to apply the new markings.

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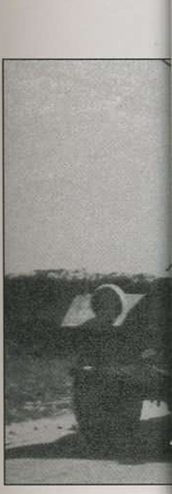

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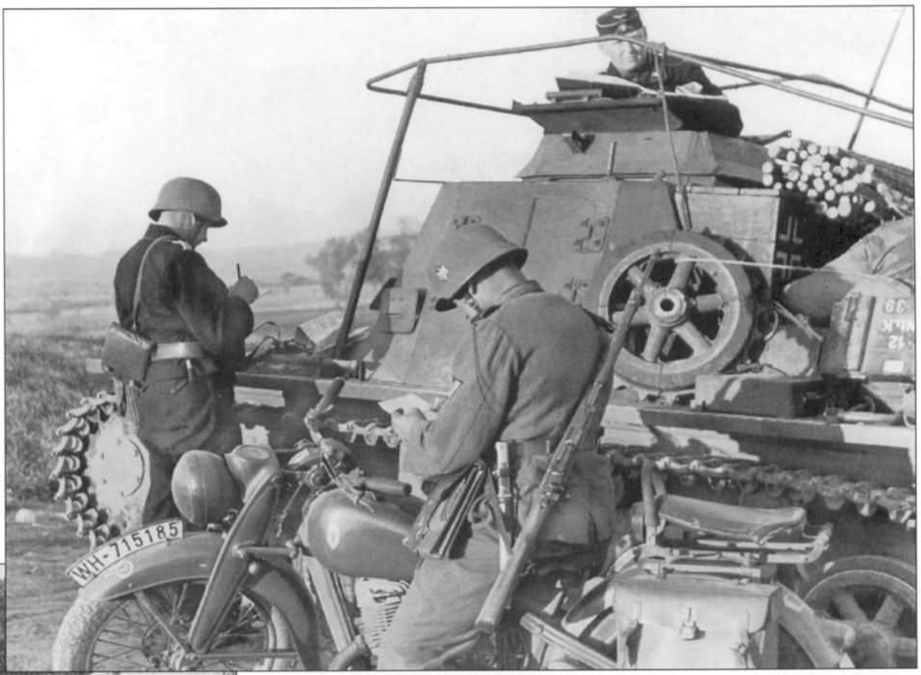
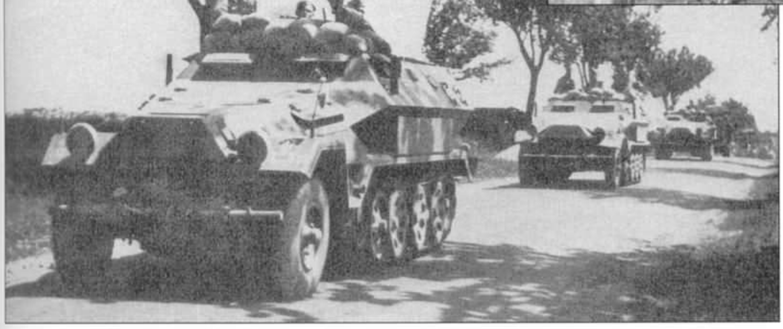
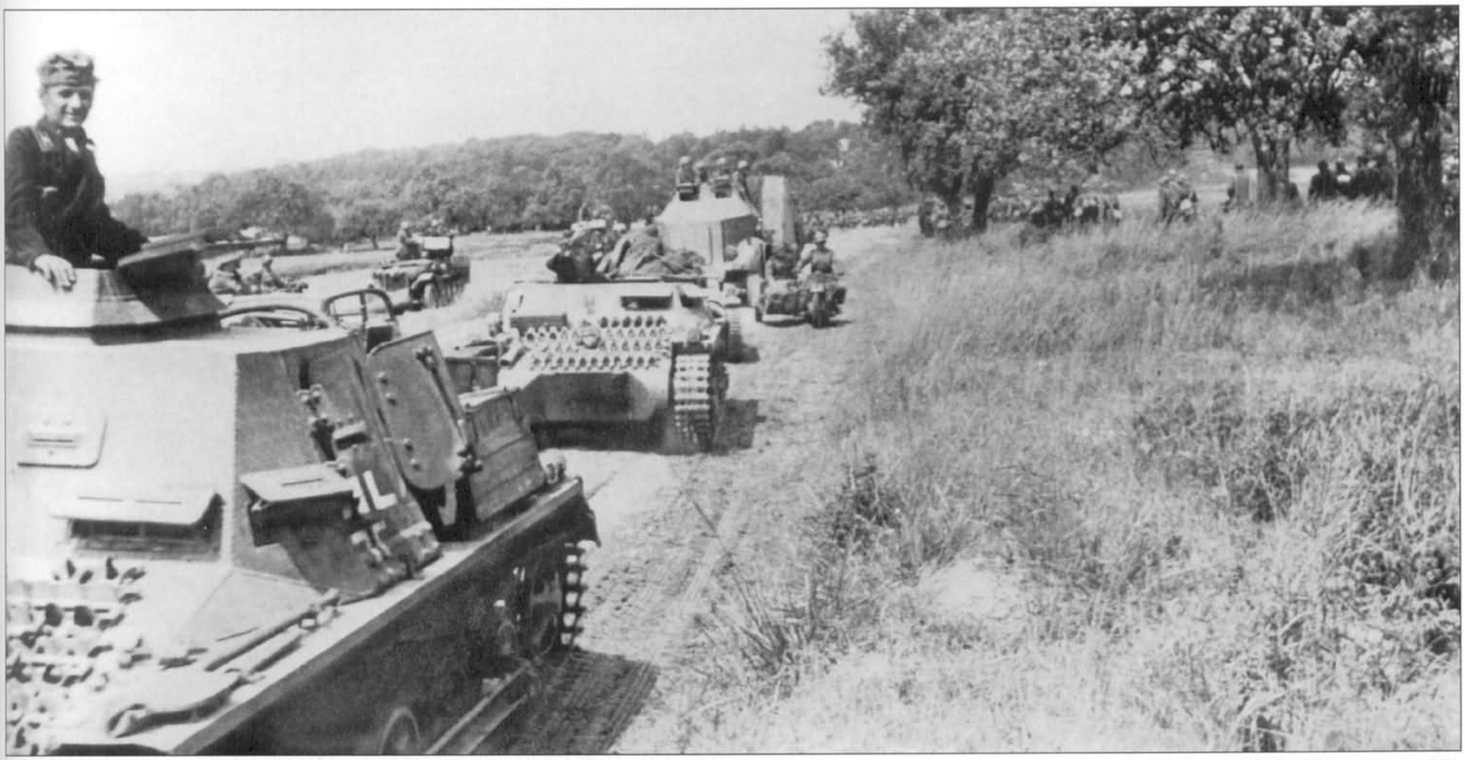
An oft-photographed Kleiner Befehlspanzerwagen I Ausf.B fitted with a large frame aerial that was not commonly seen on this vehicle. It is not clear if this was a field modification to extend the range of the radios or if it was a standard factory version with longer range radio equipment. The vehicle also has a custom designed wood stowage box on the rear superstructure and is piled with extra equipment and supplies, including roadwheels, drive sprockets and a box of smoke grenades. The dispatch rider in front rides a DKW NZ 350 while the panzer crewman to the left wears a steel helmet, not uncommon when away from their armored vehicles. Although no markings are visible, it is probable that this kl.Bef.Pz.Wg.I is from 7.Panzer-Division.

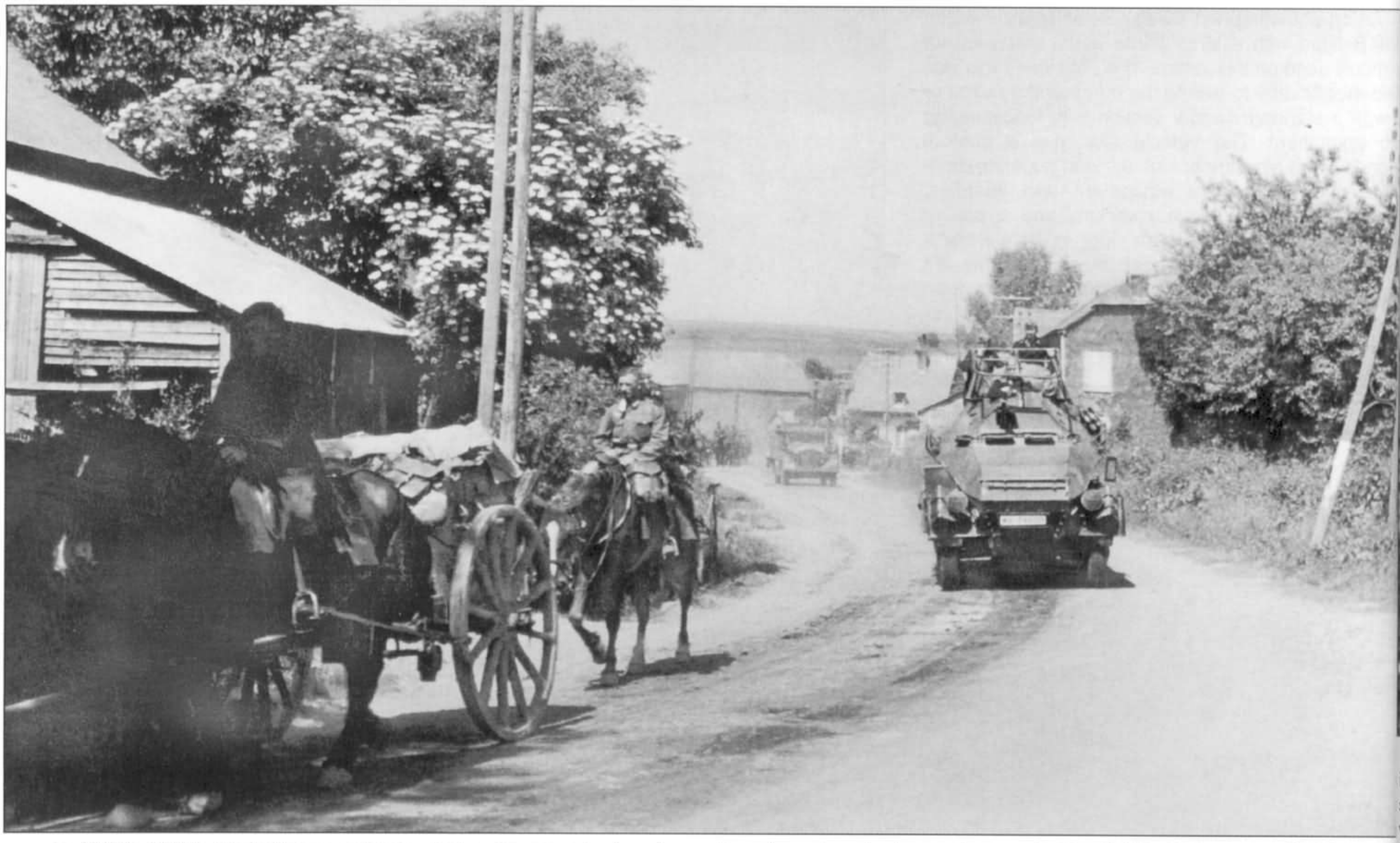




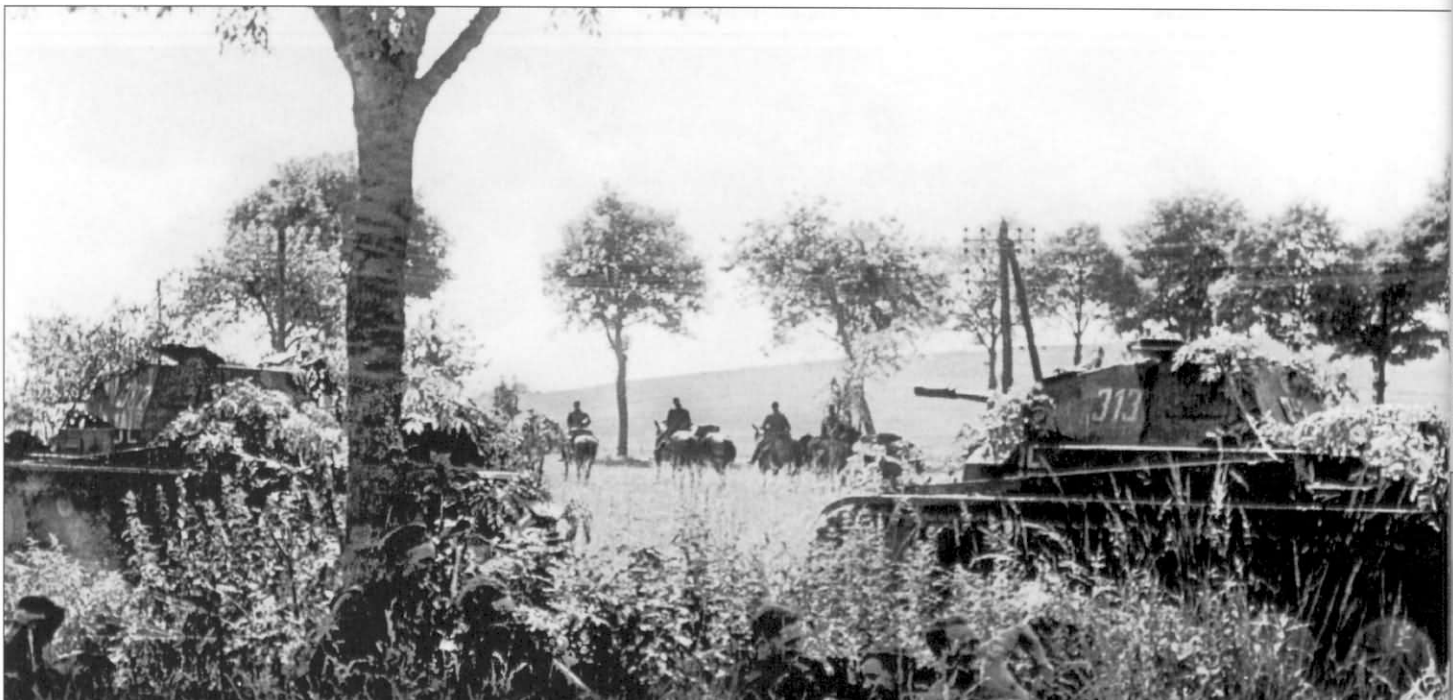
Sd.Kfz.251 Ausf.A halftracks from Schützen-Regiment 1 of 1.Panzer-Division move along a road in France. On the mudguard is the motorized infantry tactical sign with a "10" to signify 10.Kompanie and the divisional oakleaf appears above this. Sandbags are being used to provide protection for the forward MG. The trees are casting shadows that give the impression of a camouflage pattern but these vehicles are painted standard dark gray.



A very unique mix of vehicles move along a road while rows of prisoners are taken into captivity in the background. In the lead is a kl.Bef.Pz.Wg.I Ausf.B, followed by a Munitionschlepper auf Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.A, which was basically a turretless tank with the opening plated over. These were used as armored supply vehicles or as workshop vehicles. In the background is one of the massive gepanzerte 8 ton Zugkraftwagen towing a modified 8.8cm Flak 18 auf Sd.Ah.201. These were "specially built 8-ton halftracks equipped with fully armored bodies and ammunition bins towing Flak 18 guns modified with ready round ammunition bins and large armored shields. Developed specifically for the engagement of ground targets, only 33 were issued to Panzer-Jäger-Abteilung 525, 560, and 605 for Fall Gelb and Fall Rot. To the left is an Sd.Kfz.10/4 halftrack with Flak 30, while just visible beside the motorcycle-sidecar combination is what appears to be a captured French Renault UE tractor, which were used extensively by the Germans throughout WW2 as a tracked carrier and prime mover.



An Sd.Kfz.263 8-wheeled armored radio car travels around a bend on a French road past a horse-drawn unit. The Sd.Kfz.263 was a valuable asset the signals platoons by providing long range radio communications. It was equipped with a high-powered wireless set, large frame antenna, and a 9 met telescoping rod aerial for use when halted. Rommel also used one as a command vehicle during the 1940 campaign.



A pair of Pz.Kpfw.IIs stopped along a tree line as cavalry troops pass in the background. These are from 1.Panzer-Division, with the oakleaf insign visible on the turret rear. The first tank is numbered "302", while the nearest one is "313". The use of foliage as camouflage was not common during the battl for France and the Low Countries, invariably because the Wehrmacht typically had air superiority and were on the offensive. It appears to be quite effecti here though.

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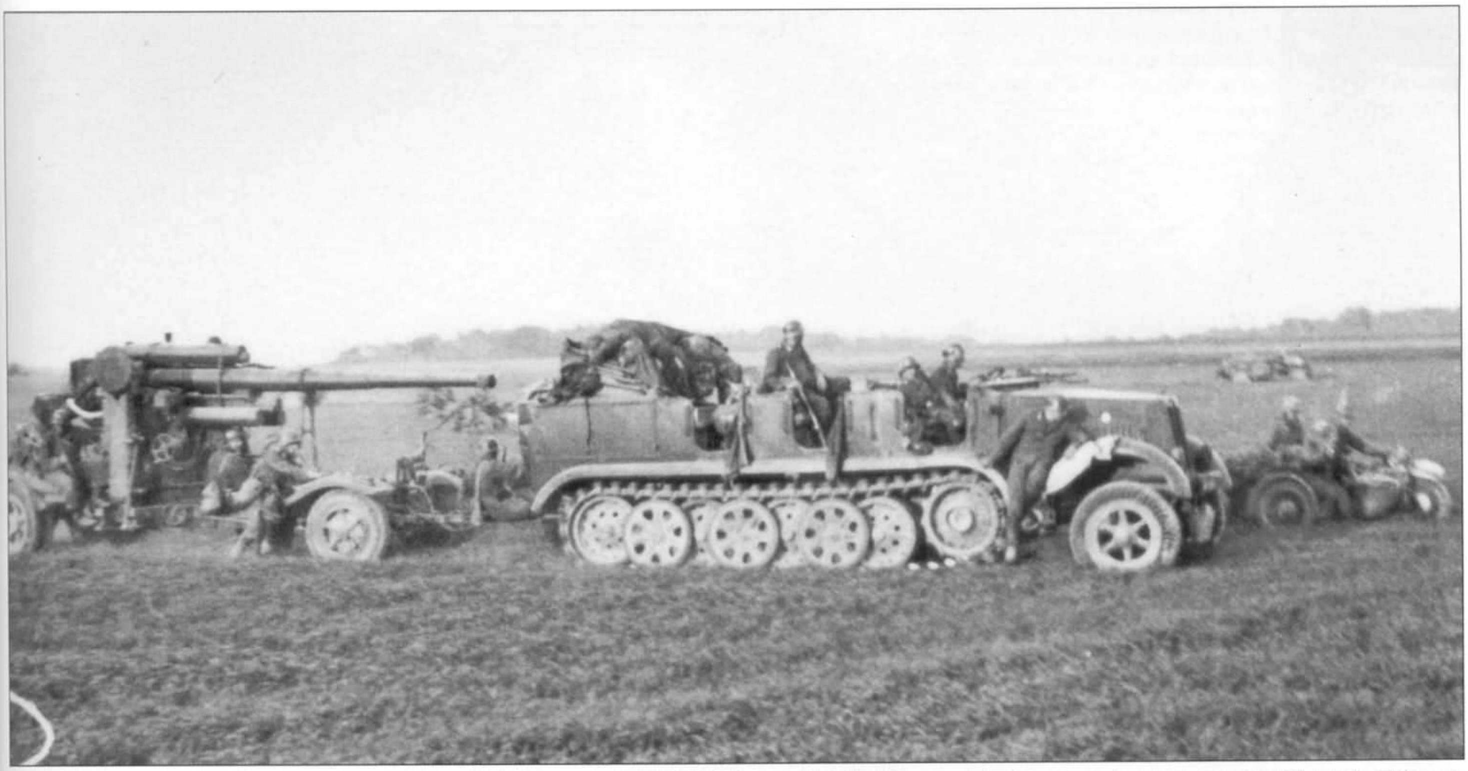
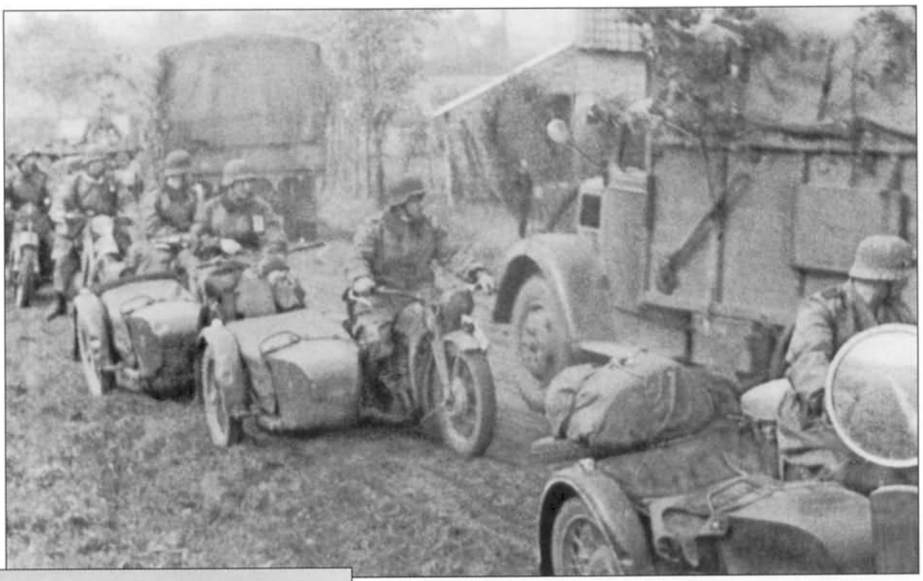
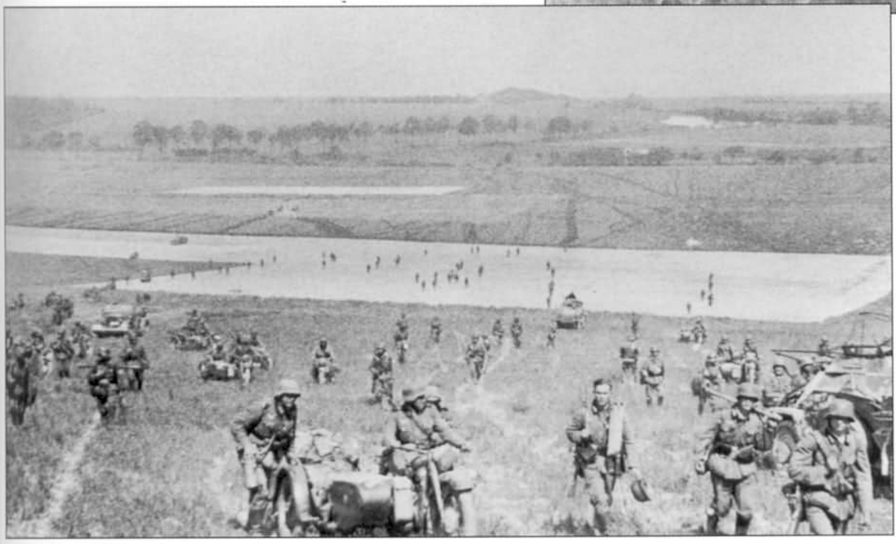


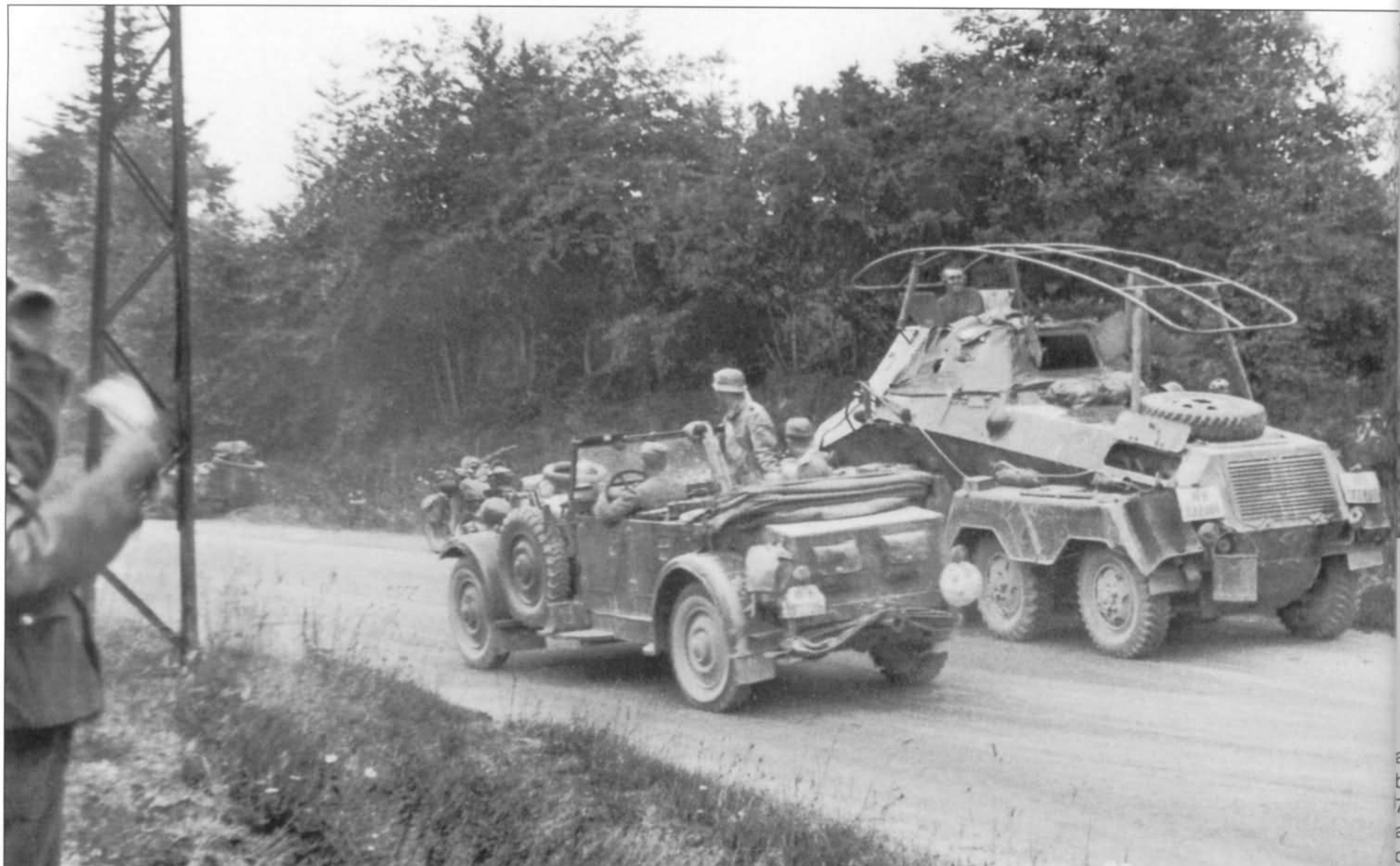
An Sd.Kfz.7 8-ton halftrack towing an 8.8cm Flak 18 on an Sd.Ah.201 sits in a field in France while its crew takes a much needed break. This gun invariable belongs to a Luftwaffe Flak unit as the few Panzer-Jäger-Abteilung equipped with 88s in the Battle of France used the modified guns with large shields. Although the Flakartillerie was employed against French tanks in some instances, this was not a common occurrence and many more enemy aircraft were destroyed than tanks.

Another group of motorcyclists, this time lead by three Zündapp KS600 combinations. Motorcycles were widely used by the Wehrmacht in the early stages of WW2 not only for reconnaissance and dispatch work, but also to mobilize many infantry units. This was beneficial to allow the infantry to keep pace with the panzer units but was useless once Germany was on the defensive.

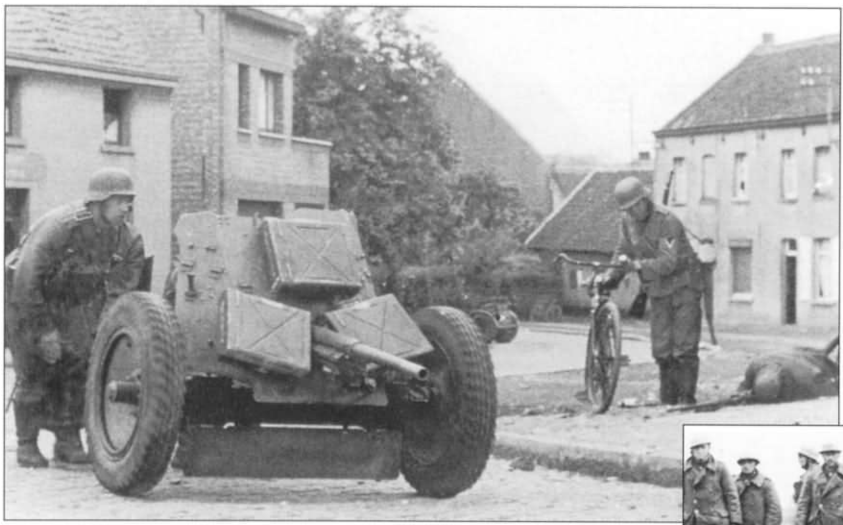




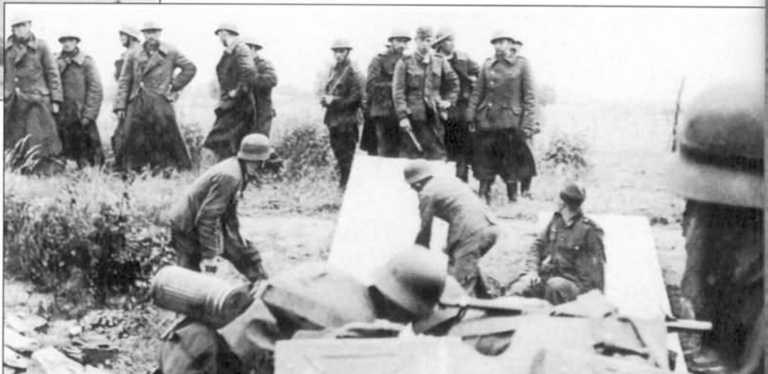
A unique photograph of men and machines advancing across a plain in France. Amongst the hundreds of infantrymen are BMW R35 motorcycle sidecar combinations, a Kfz.15 medium Pkw. and what appears to be an Sd.Kfz.231 (8 rad) in the distance. To the right is a Sd.Kfz.222 armored car with a tactical number "122" in white on the turret side. Use of tactical numbers on armored cars was somewhat uncommon in the French campaign.



An Alder Type 3 GD passenger car passes an Sd.Kfz.263 Panzerfunkwagen stopped on a road with some motorcycle combinations. The Adler was of a multitude of makes and models of automobiles that were used by the Germans in many roles, including command and radio cars, prime movers, infan transport, and reconnaissance. The armored car has a national cross on its rear ventilation grille.



A 3.7cm Pak 35/36 antitank gun is manhandled i position by its crew. This was the only dedicated towed antita gun in service with the Wehrmacht at this time and it proved be very ineffective against most French tanks, except extremely close range. Ammunition boxes have been hung the front shield for easy access and transportation. The bicy mounted Gefreiter to the right appears to be looking at a de or wounded comrade lying on the ground.



Another Pak 35/36 gun crew manhandling their gun across a stream, with planks being positioned to assist in dragging it up the bank. The gun weighed less than 1000lbs so its four man crew could easily move it short distances, although in situations like this they would require additional help. Once again, ammunition boxes, each with 14 rounds, are strapped to the gunshield. French prisoners watch the spectacle on the far bank.

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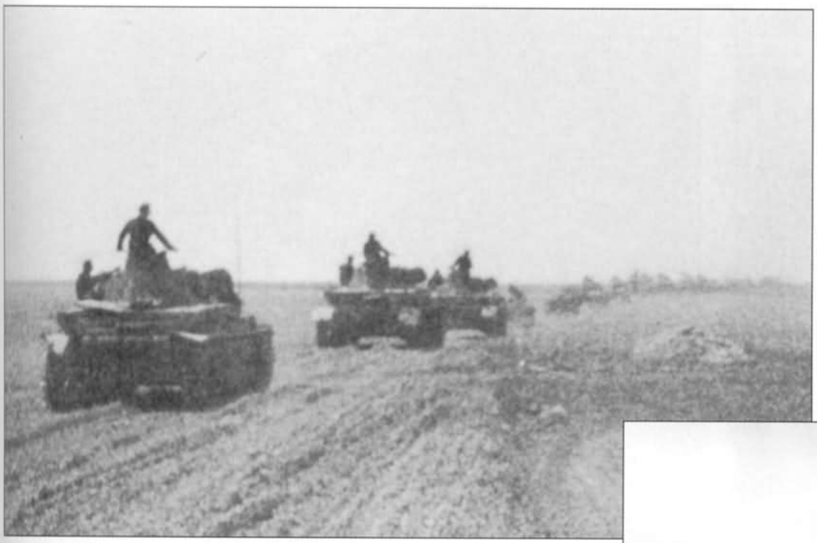
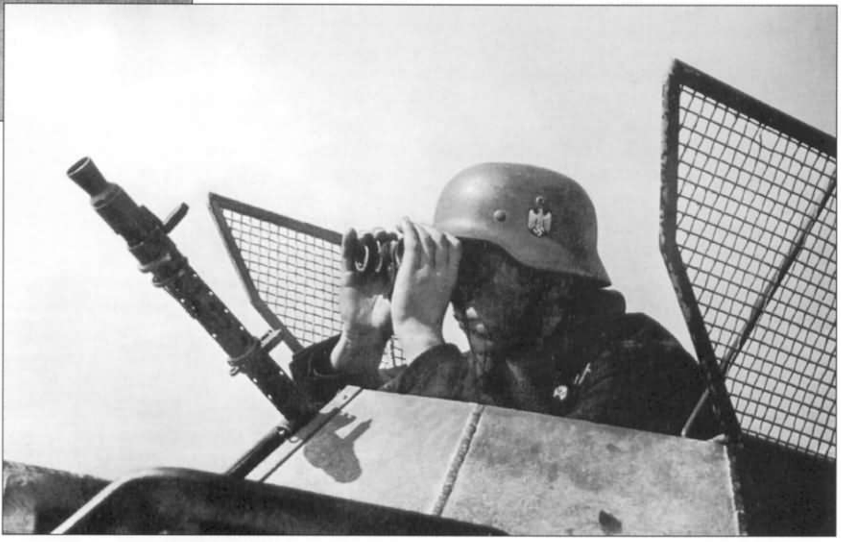
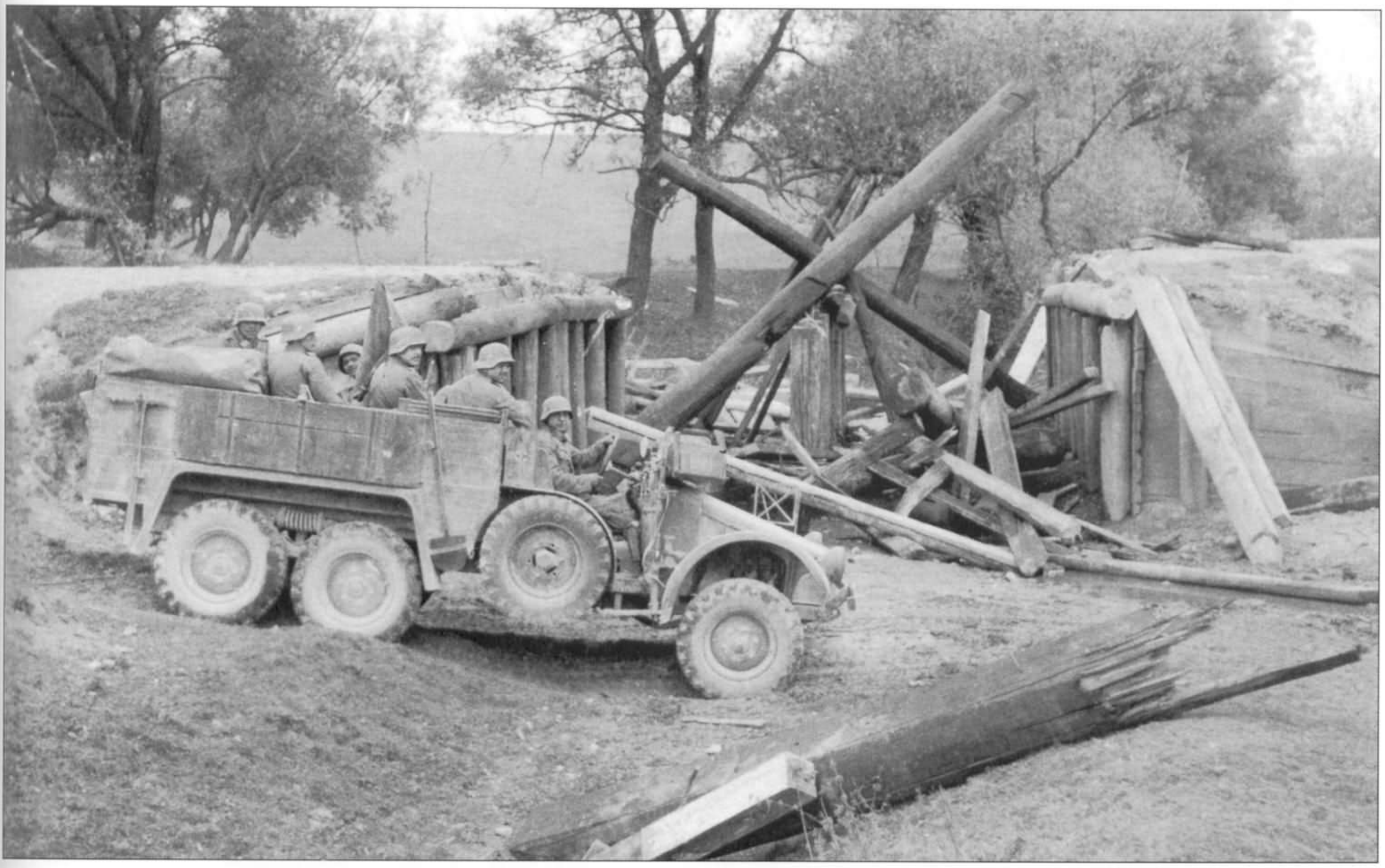


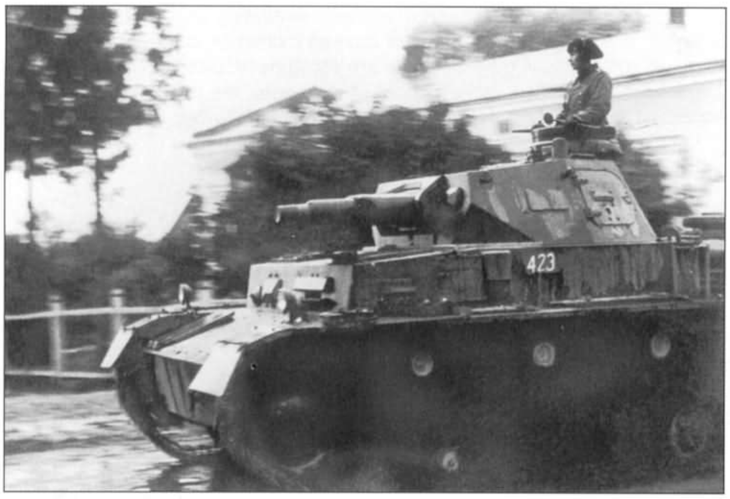
A long column of panzers stretching as far as the eye can see kicks up a cloud of dust as it crosses another French field. The last three vehicles are Pz.Kpfw.IV. Based on the barrel of the MG34 at the bottom of the photo, the picture was probably taken from a halftrack or armored car following the armored unit. This scene was invariably repeated numerous times throughout the June campaign as the armored units quickly advanced across France.



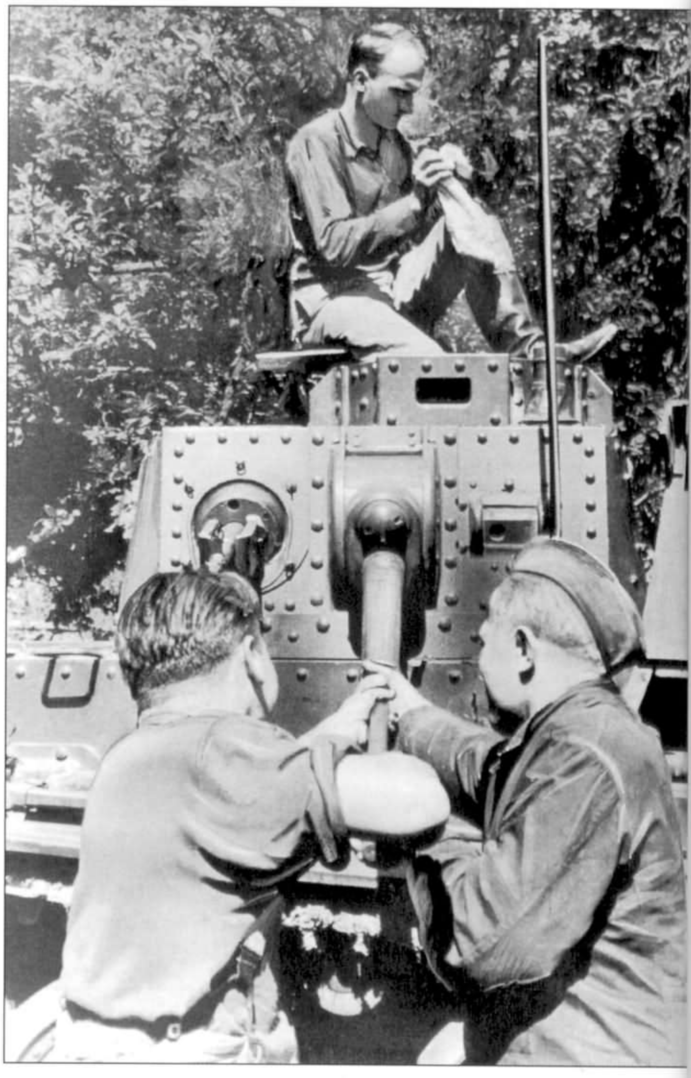
An interesting close-up of the turret of an Sd.Kfz.221 armored car as the vehicle commander peers through his binoculars at something in the distance. The barrel of the 7.92mm MG34 main armament is visible, as are the wire mesh anti-grenade screens that covered the open turret when folded down. For additional protection he wears an M1935 steel helmet with the standard silver-white Wehrmacht eagle marking, and visible on the collar is the death's head insignia of the panzertruppen.



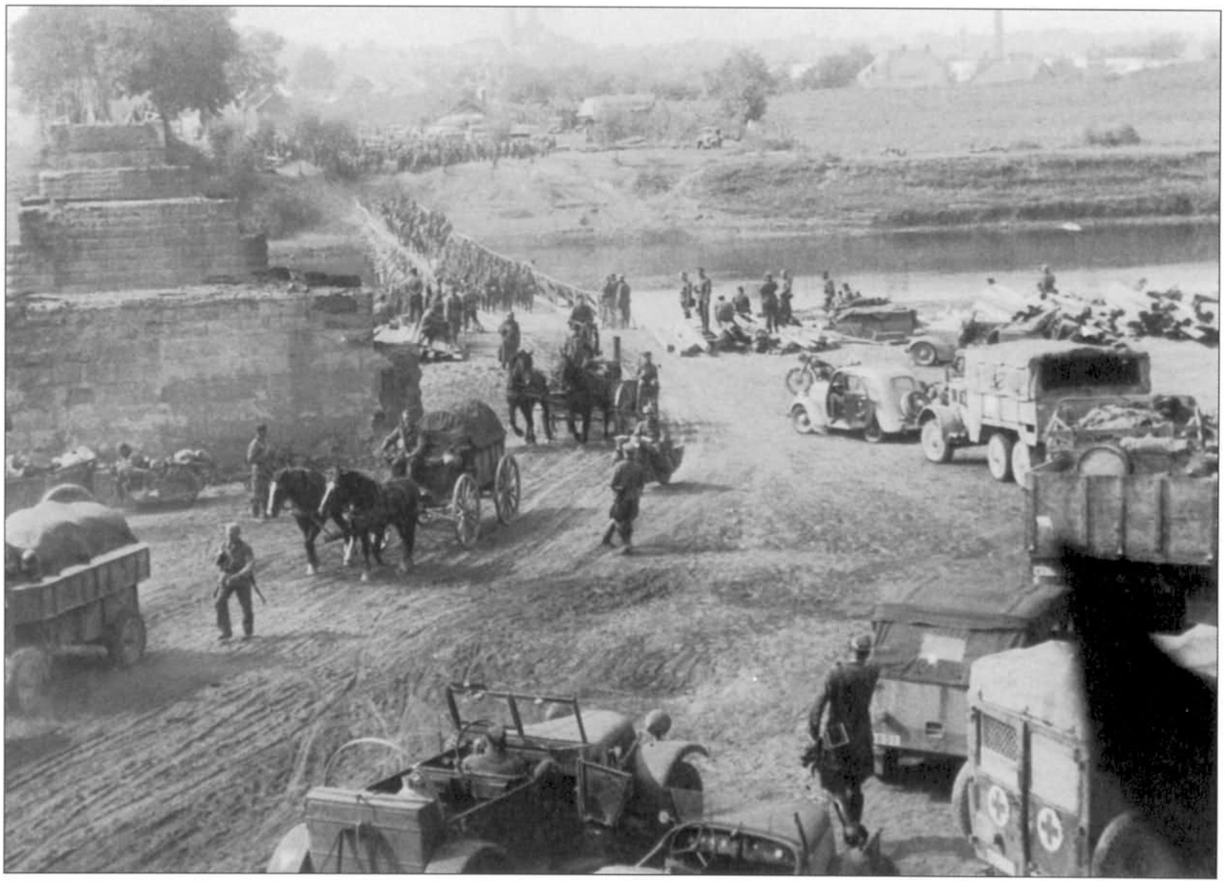
A truck load of infantry passes a destroyed bridge or barricade. The Krupp Protze Kfz.69 was the most common light truck in service with the Wehrmacht at this time and they were used as personnel carriers, prime movers, supply vehicles and even self-propelled anti-aircraft guns. This 6x4 had a 1.5ton payload capacity and a very distinctive sloping hood, which is clearly seen here.



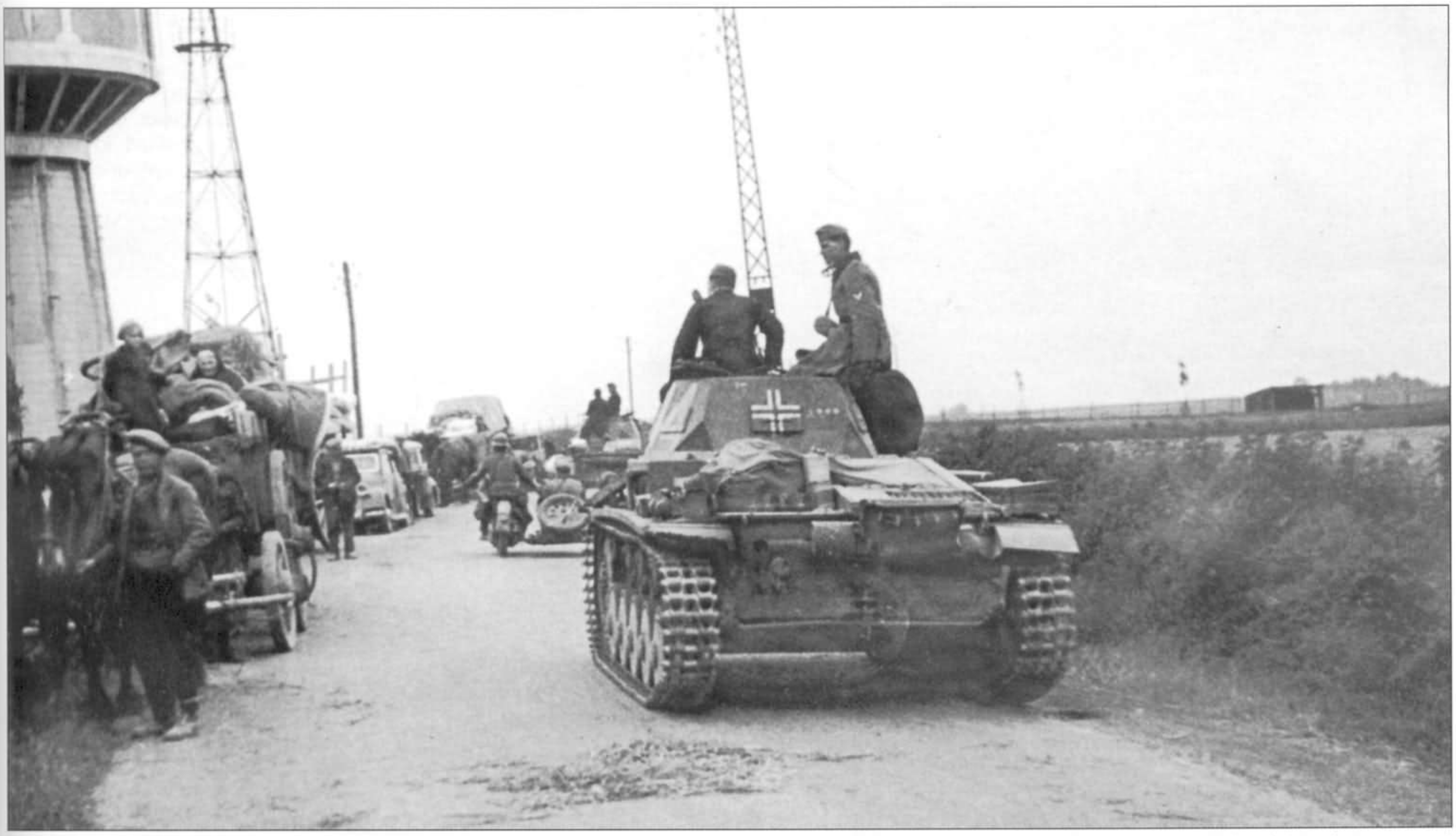
A speeding Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.B moves through a French town. The commander has donned his M1935 pattern greatcoat to protect himself from the rain and wears the M1934 padded beret. Unusually, he carries a signal-baton, which were normally issued only to military police traffic controllers. It is most likely that this tank is the lead vehicle in a column and therefore the baton would be useful for signaling the other vehicles.



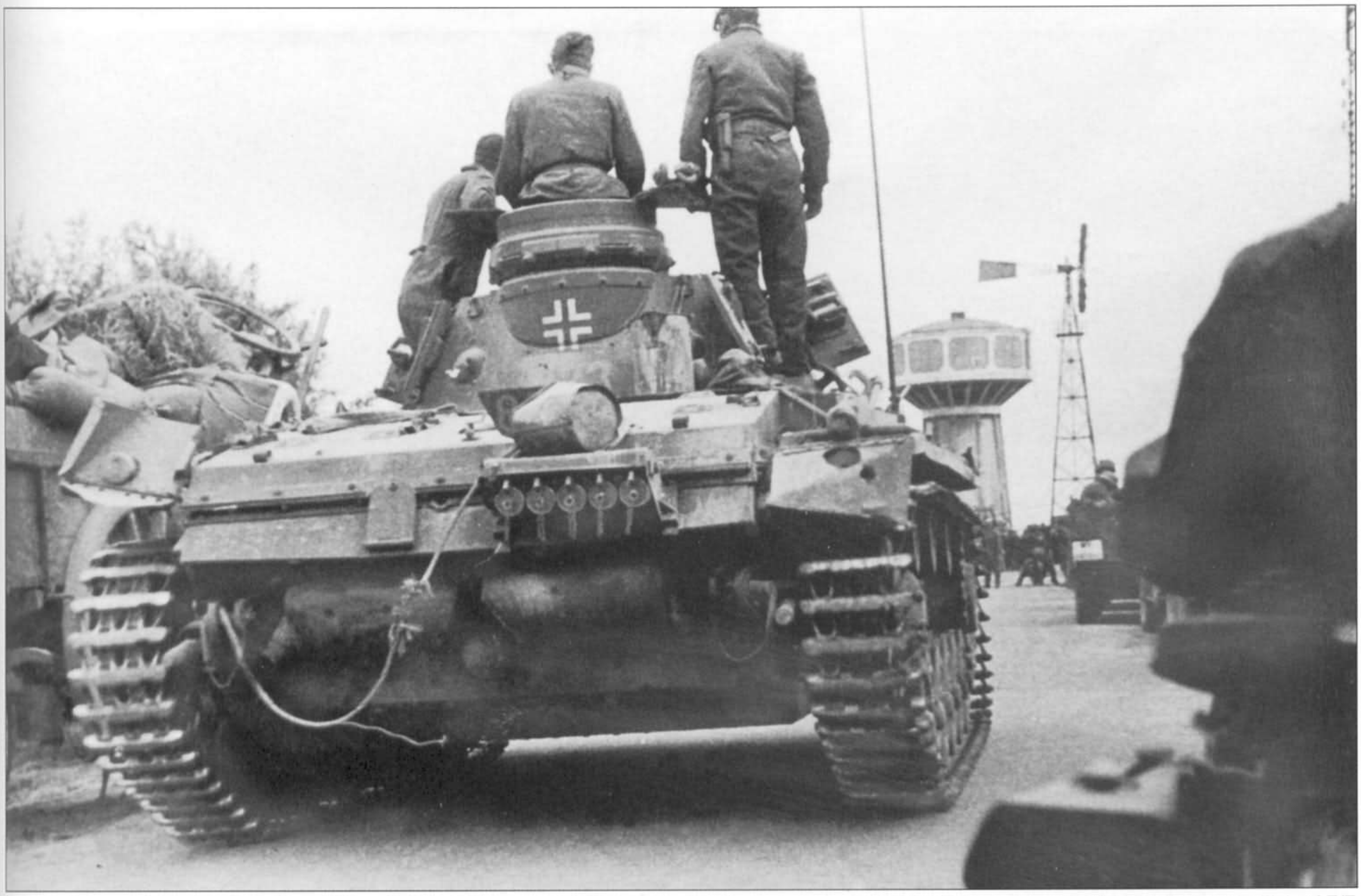
In this heavily re-touched photograph, crewmen clean the 3.7cm gun barrel of a Panzerbefehlswagen 38(t) Ausf.A. Instead of a frame aerial over the engine compartment, this vehicle mounts an additional rod aerial, visible to the right of the turret gun sight above the crewman's head. Notice that the door to the engine compartment has also been opened, undoubtedly for other maintenance work.



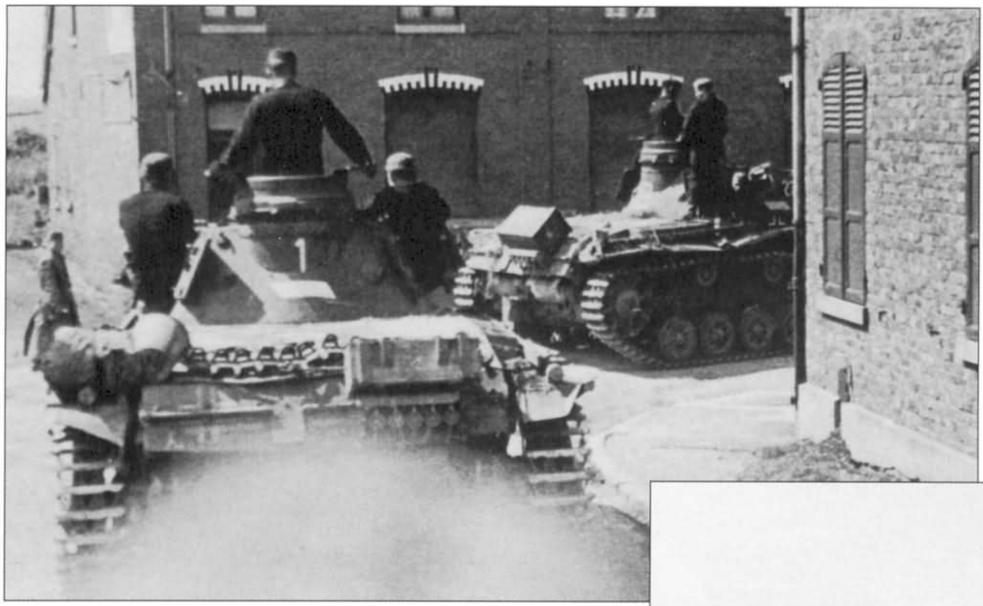
An excelle photograph that sho the diversity equipment used by t Wehrmacht, even this early stage of t war. To the right, motorized colu waits for infantry a horse-drawn units clear a tempora bridge that has be built beside the piers a destroyed structu The horse-dra wagons consist of grosser Gefechtswagen Hf. followed by a leich Heeresfeldwagen H and a Feldkuche Hf. (field kitchen). Behi the sedan at the fro of the column is Büssing-NAG Einheit Diesel 6x6 truc Finally, in t foreground is a Kfz. Phanomen ambulan and what appears be an Adler Type 3 G although the rear h been modified for unknown purpose.



A Pz.Kpfw.II, the 7.Panzer-Division insignia clearly visible on the turret rear along with the standard large turret numbers on the side, advances past refugees that are probably fleeing the fighting. The large structure to the left is unidentified, but it appears to be some type of storage for water or grain.

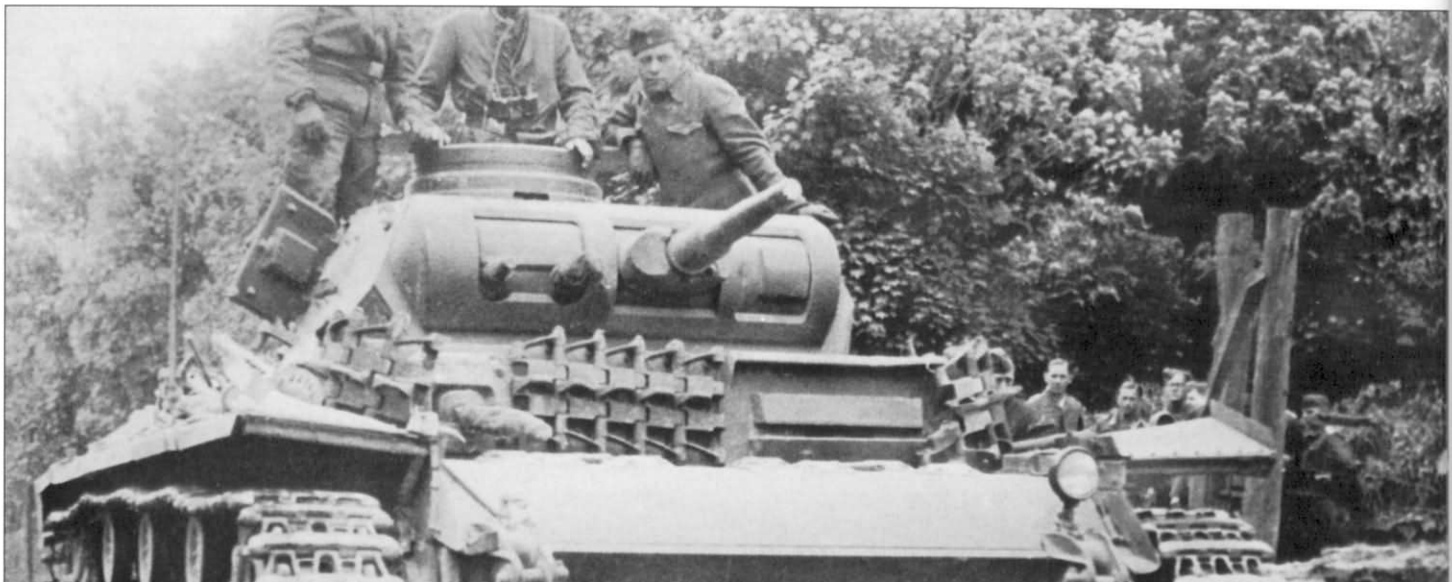


Another photograph taken a short time after the previous one, as the wagon to the left appears in both pictures. The identity of this Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.E/F is unknown, as 7.Panzer-Division was not equipped with Panzer IIIs. A very faint turret number in yellow, "823", appears below the cupola bulge, which is also not characteristic of this division. It is possible that it belongs to 5.Panzer-Division, which operated alongside 7th for both Fall Gelb and Fall Rot, and has somehow become mixed up with the wrong unit during the advance. The tail of the windmill seems to be painted in the French tricolor.



A clear photograph of 5.Panzer-Divisi markings on a pair of Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.E/F. T white elongated rhomboid was a unique marki that may have distinguished between the t regiments and very few tanks carried 3 di tactical numbers, opting instead for two or single digit as seen here. To further confirm th identity, the divisional insignia adopted for t French campaign, an inverted "Y" with a sin dot in yellow, is visible on the rear plate besi the national cross.

Pz.Kpfw.IV move along a track in France, with an Ausf.C leading the column. For the French campaign, each panzer abteilung (battalion) typically consisted of two light and one medium panzer company. Pz.Kpfw.IV were the primary component of the medium companies, although one zug (platoon) was equipped with Pz.Kpfw.IIs for support. Unfortunately, many of the regiments did not receive their full complement of Pz.Kpfw.IVs, so lighter tanks had to be substituted.



The Pz.Kpfw.III, along with the Czech produced Pz.Kpfw.35(t) and 38(t), were the only tanks carrying an effective anti-tank weapon, the 3.7cm gu Unfortunately, they accounted for less than one quarter of the total inventory of tanks available for the invasion. Once fighting began, it was discovered th the 3.7cm was ineffective against many of the Allies' more heavily armored tanks. The Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.E shown here has dust covers over all the armame and the crew has placed spare track sections over the glacis plate for additional protection.

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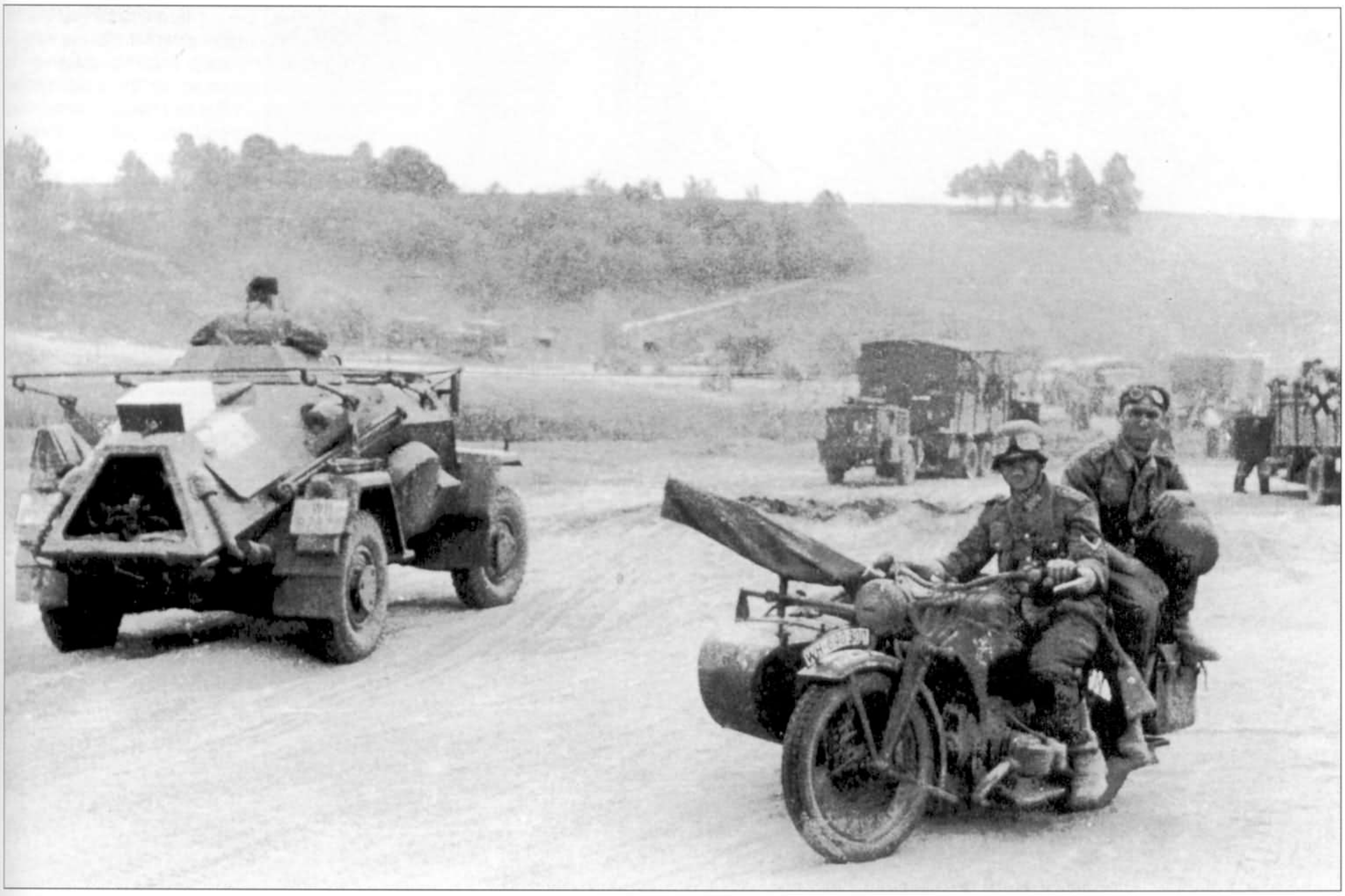
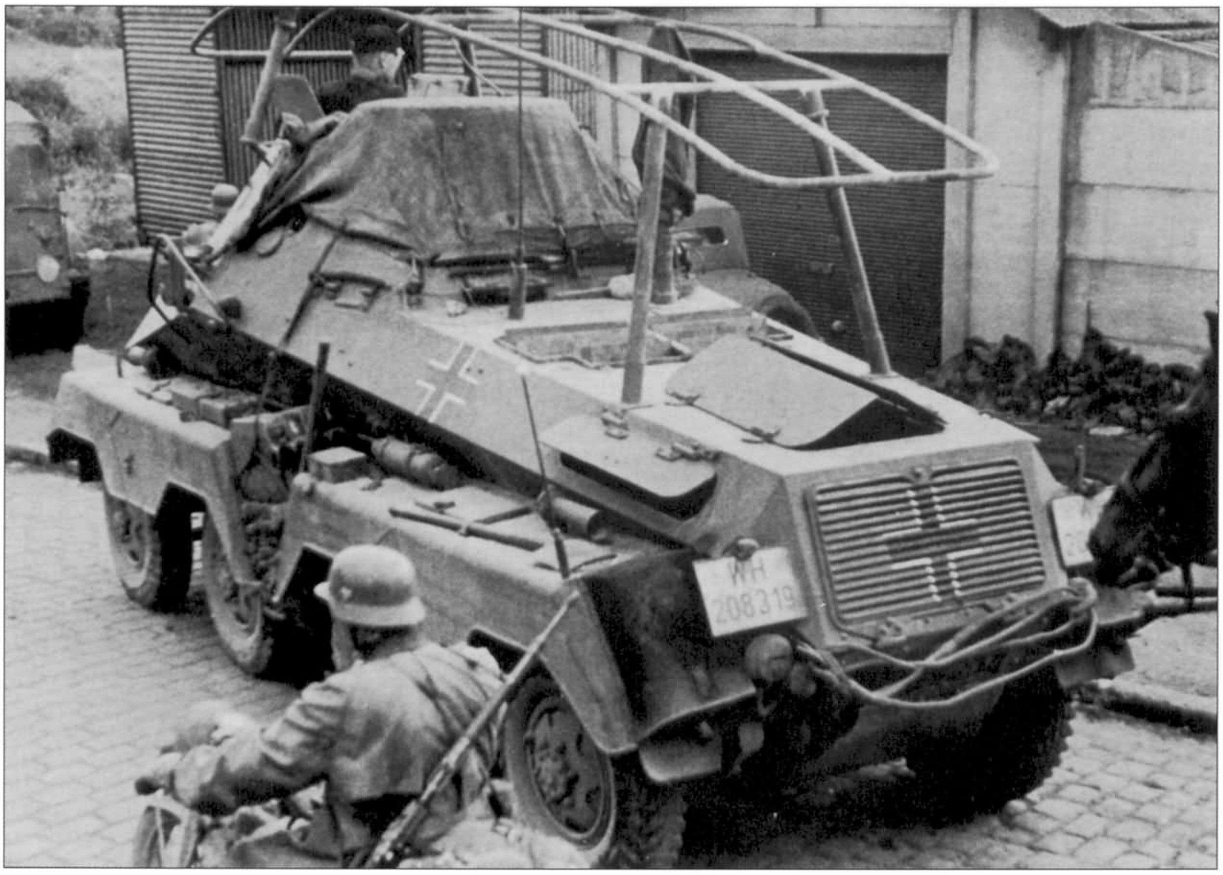
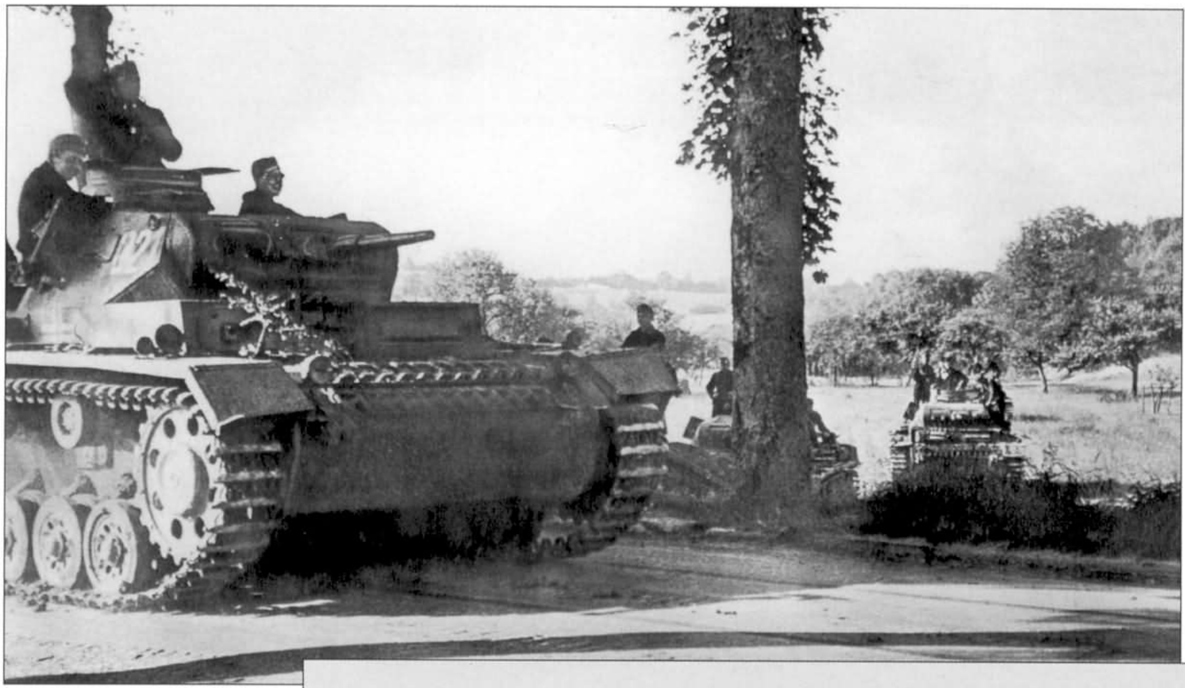


An array of vehicles move through a shallow valley, with a Zündapp KS600 motorcycle combination in the foreground, equipped with an MG34 mounted on the sidecar. The Sd.Kfz.223 (WH82875) has its frame aerial folded down and the white aerial recognition rectangle can be seen painted across the top of the stowage box and down either side onto the hull. It is missing the rear ventilation grille, most likely removed due to irreparable damage. Further up the road is a Henschel Type 33 D1 6x4 truck towing a compressor or generator.



An Sd.Kfz.263 parked on the roadside with its engine access doors propped open to assist in engine cooling. In addition to the standard frame aerial and telescoping mast, this vehicle also has a third rod aerial, which was not a standard fitting and probably indicates that additional radio equipment has been installed. A tire is carried under the roof tarpaulin, which was a common place to stow the spare.



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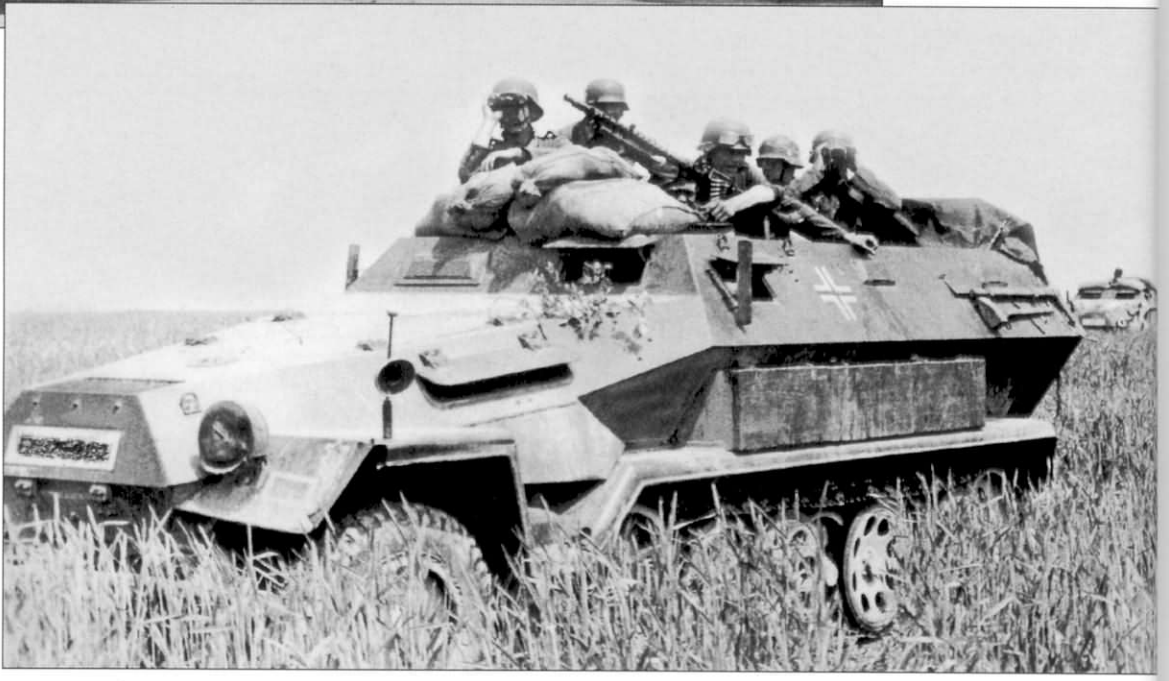
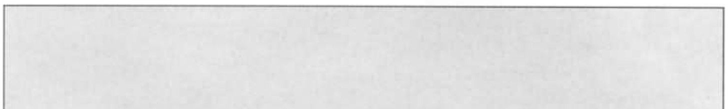
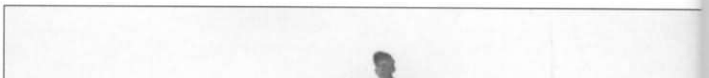


A group of Sd.Kfz.251 Ausf.A halftracks halt in a field in the Aisne sector of France to observe something in the distance. The oakleaf emblem of 1.Panzer-Division is visible on the fender as well as the tactical symbol for motorized infantry. Sandbags are being used to provide protection for the MG34 machinegun, which is mounted on a swing arm identical to the one carried above the rear doors. Later versions of the Sd.Kfz.251 were equipped with a shield for the forward machinegun due to the experiences in France and Poland.

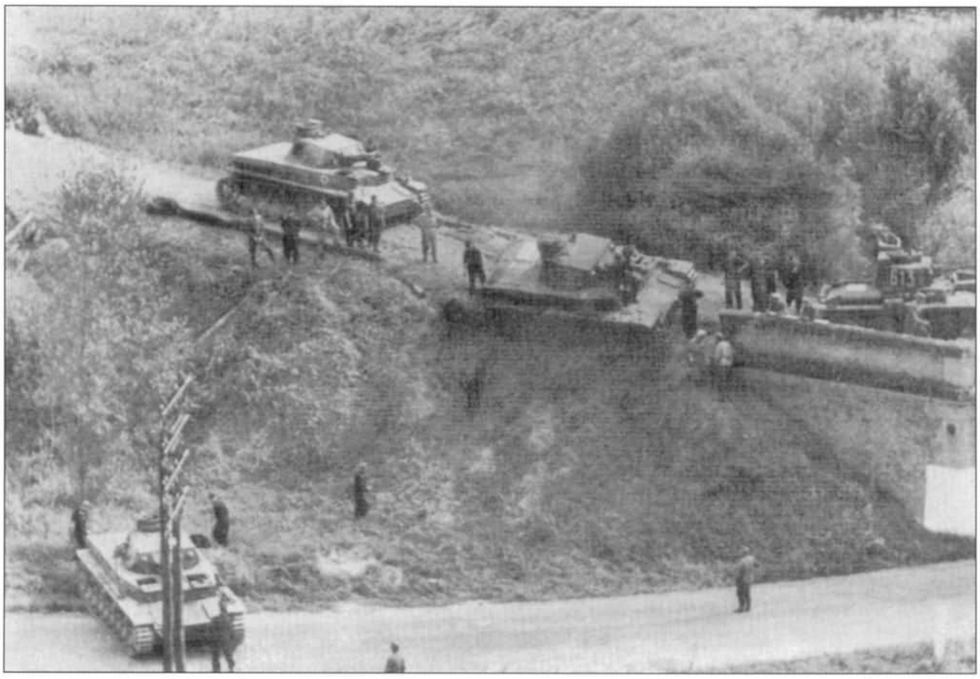


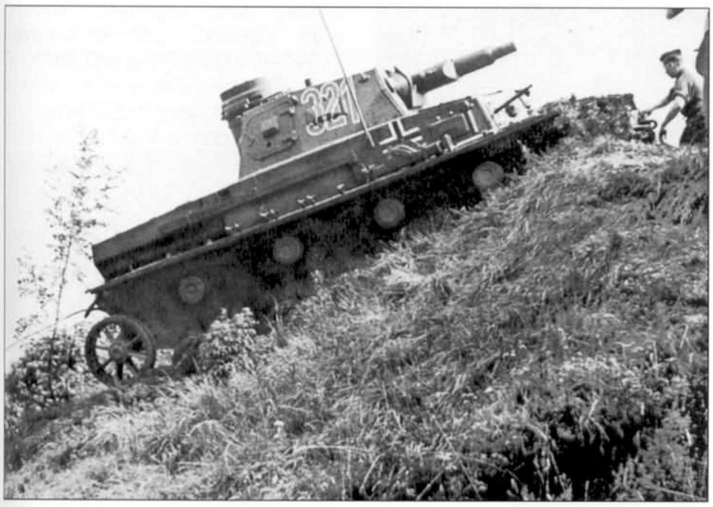
A German armored unit sweeps across a field in the Aisne sector in early June at the start of Fall Rot. These are presumably part of Gruppe Guderian, and were to cross the Aisne River once the infantry had opened the way and bridges had been built. The majority of the tanks are Panzerkampfwagen II but a few Panzerkampfwagen I are also visible. This was the most common mix of vehicles for most of the Panzer Regiments that took part in Fall Gelb and Fall Rot.



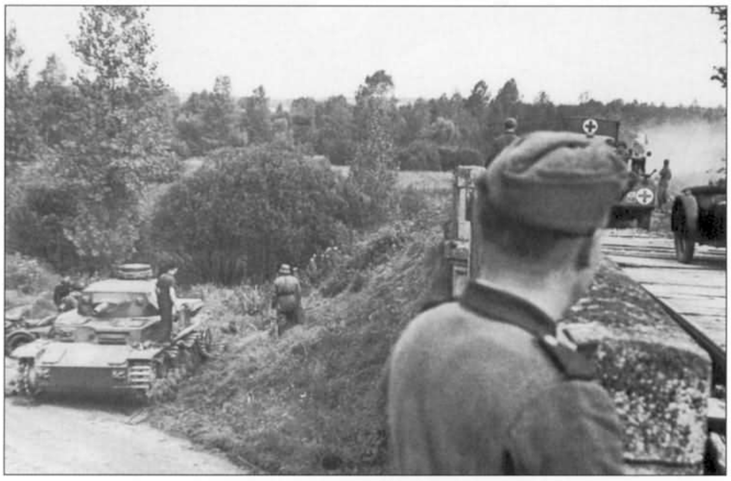
With its large frame antenna visible over the engine deck,
Panzerbefehlswagen III Ausf.E command tank is seen near Peronne, Franc
during Fall Rot. No markings are visible and this vehicle has what appear
to be a Panzerkampfwagen II style armored visor cover over the driver's vie
port instead of the standard Pz.Kpfw.III vision block.

These photographs were taken in the early morning of June 5, the opening day of Fall Rot, as 7.Panzer-Division advanced down a railway embankment after crossing the Somme. A Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.D with tactical number "321" lost a track just before crossing an overpass and as a result held up the entire advance. In the first photo there appears to be some discussion as to the best course of action to remove the obstacle. A Pz.Kpfw.38(t) and two more Panzer IV Ausf.D are in position to assist. 321's lost track can be seen amongst the group of men beside the rearmost Panzer IV. This shot also gives a good view of the aerial recognition rectangles painted on the engine decks of the tanks. Rommel took this picture while standing on the hillside overlooking the site.



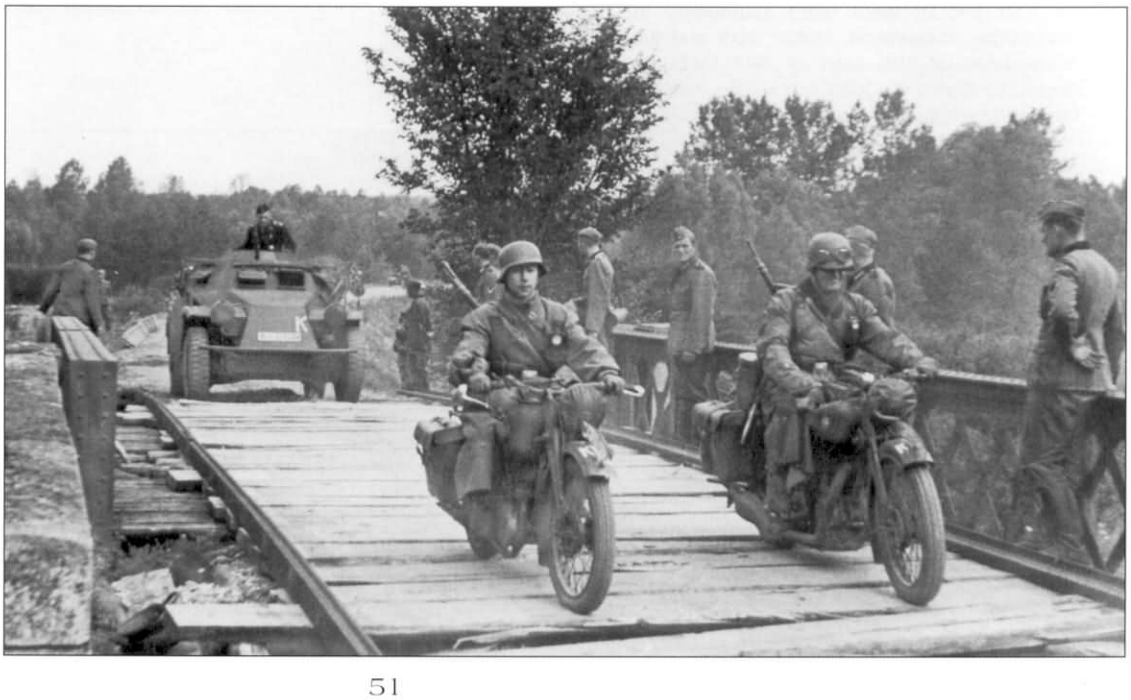


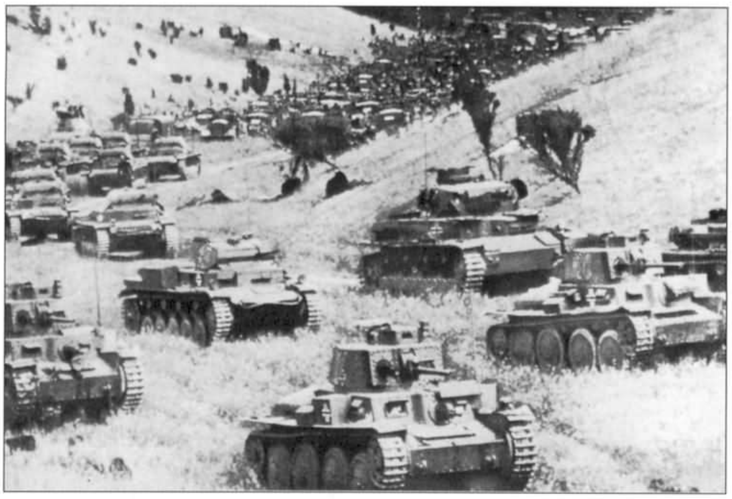
In the second photo "321" has been turned 90 degrees and dragged over the edge of the embankment to allow traffic to continue across the bridge while they decide what to do with the tank.



Finally, "321" has been dragged all the way to the bottom of the embankment so repairs can be made. A medical unit displaying prominent Red Cross symbols is moving across the bridge led by a motorcycle-sidecar combination.

Another photo taken at the same location as two Kradschützen lead an Sd.Kfz.223 across the bridge. Engineers from Pionier-Bataillon 58 removed the railway track and ties from the bridge deck to provide a proper roadway for the division. All the vehicles carry a "K" marking that is highly unusual as 7.Panzer-Division was not part of Gruppe von Kleist for either Fall Gelb or Fall Rot, nor were any other units in this sector. It is known that there were anomalies to this system and it is possible that the K represents something else, perhaps the commander of the unit. Or it may be that a unit assigned to Gruppe von Kleist has moved over to 7.Panzer-Division's sector.



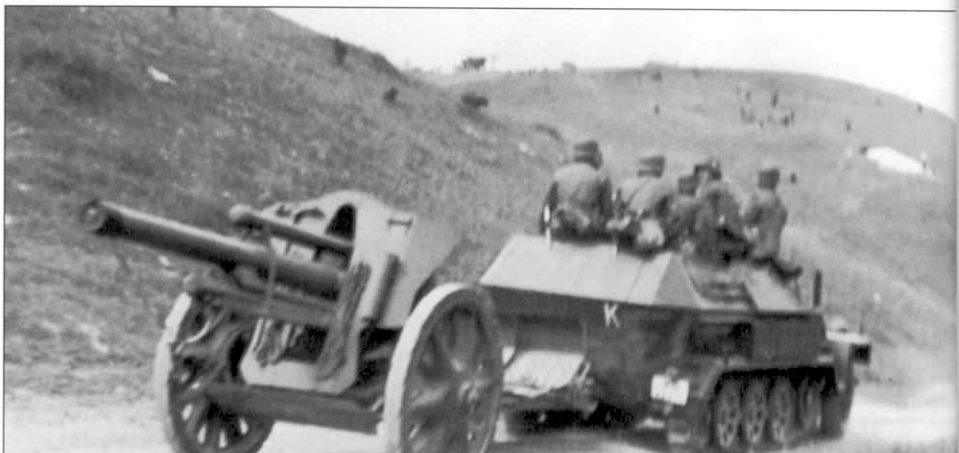


Massed elements of Rommel's 7.Panzer-Division leave the Somme River valley through La Grande Vallee on June 5. Numerous types of armored vehicles can be seen, including three Pz.Kpfw.38(t) Ausf. B or C, a single Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.D with another Pz.Kpfw.IV in front of it, at least nine Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf.A-C, and an Sd.Kfz.263 armored car. Passenger cars and trucks of every type appear in the distance. Considering that most of the Panzer-Divisions had over 150 tanks at the start of Fall Rot, those seen in the photo are only a very small portion of the armored vehicles in 7.Panzer-Division.

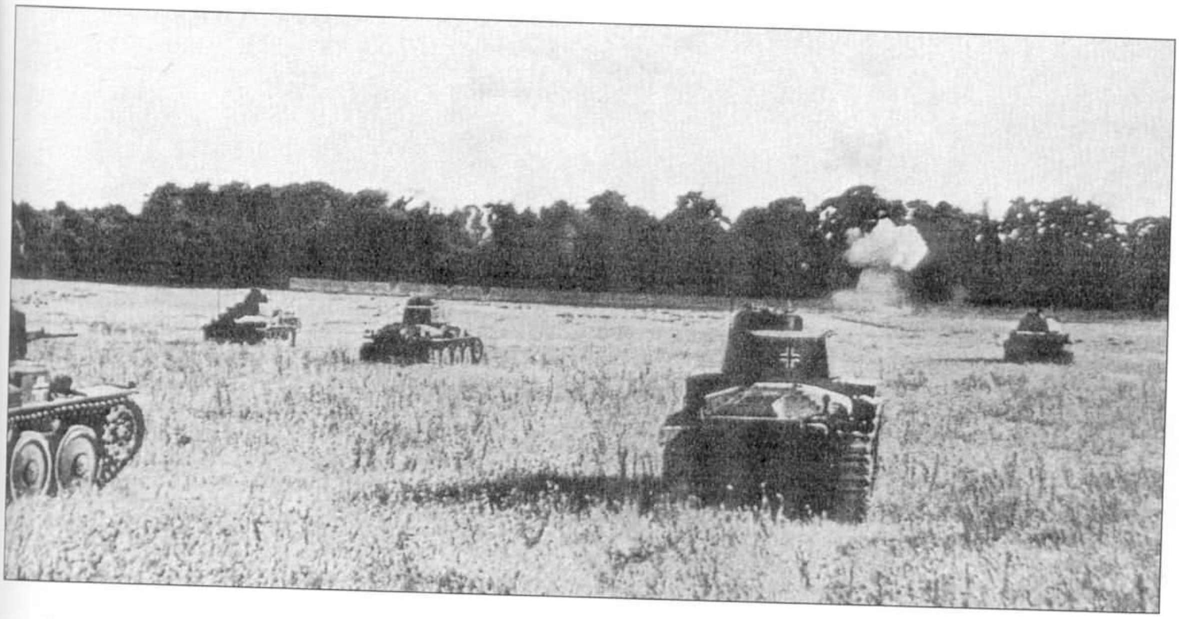
A long column of 7.Panzer-Division vehicles winds its way along
valley south of the Somme in early June, heading for an exit point onto th
plains above as seen to the right of the photo. The first three trucks a
Krupp Protze Kfz.69, although the two lead vehicles are a modified versio
that was used as a prime mover for the 3.7cm Pak 35/36, which they a
towing here. Instead of the standard cargo body, it was equipped wi
ammunition stowage lockers and additional crew seating. A large whi
swastika is painted on the hood for aerial recognition.

Two photographs taken in early June of 7.Panzer-Division tanks waiting to resume the advance in a valley south of the Somme. In the first picture a Fieseler Fi-156 "Storch" flies low over the group as the crews look on. These durable light aircraft were used extensively throughout the war for reconnaissance, observation, liaison work and as transport aircraft. Over 100 were used at the start of Fall Gelb to land 400 men from Großdeutschland as a vanguard force in the Ardennes to help assist Gruppe von Kleist in traversing the forest.

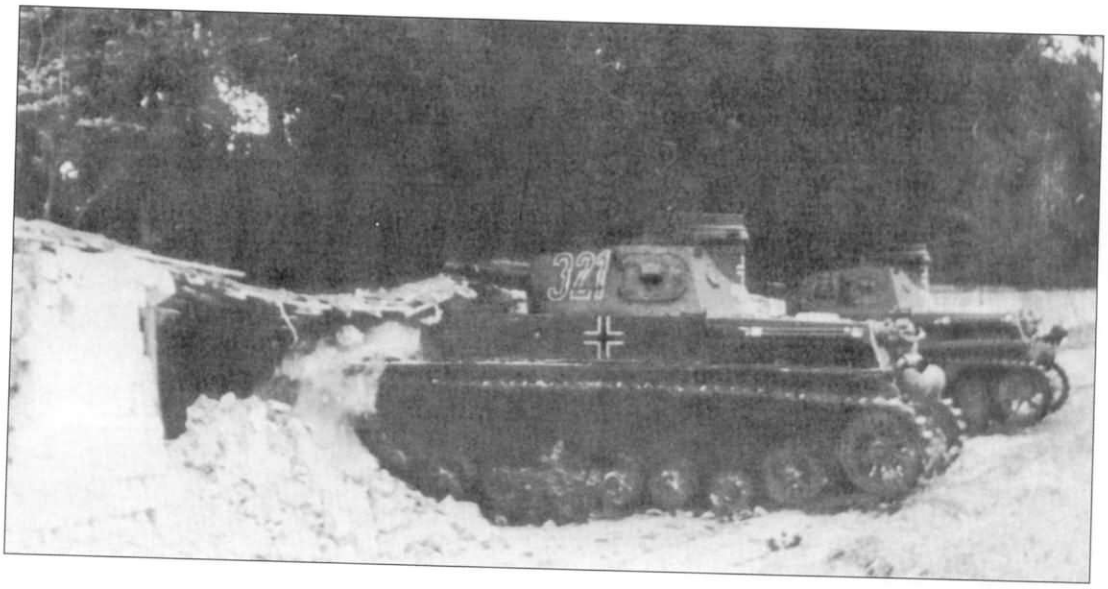
A portion of the divisional insignia can just be seen on the front plate
the Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.D in this photograph. Behind it are numerou
Pz.Kpfw.38(t).



An Sd.kfz.251 Ausf.A halftrack towing a 10.5cm leFH18 field gun near the Somme River in early June. Although difficult to tell from this view, it is probably a 251/4, which was developed as a towing and ammunition vehicle for the 7.5cm leIG18 light infantry gun but eventually used as a prime mover for heavier guns such as the one shown here. It carries the white Gruppe von Kliest "K" marking on the rear door.



Tanks from 7.Panzer-Division advance across a field near Quesnoy in the late afternoon of June 5. They are attacking the Chateau du Quesnoy, the perimeter wall of which is visible in front of the tree line. The chateau was defended by a colored battalion from the 53ème R.I.C., a colonial infantry regiment manned by Senegal troops. Although they put up a tough fight, they were no match for Rommel's tanks and were defeated before the end of the day.

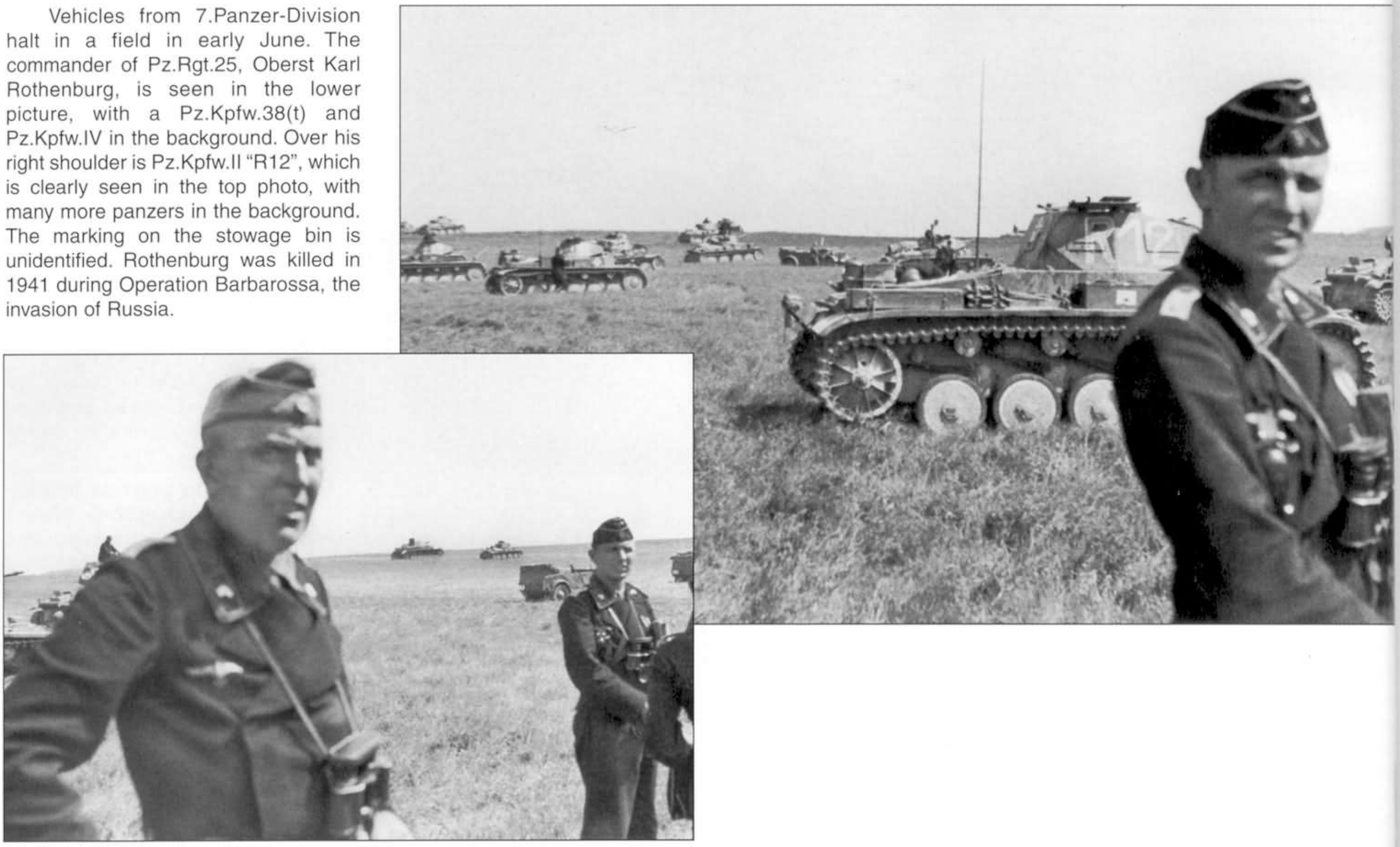


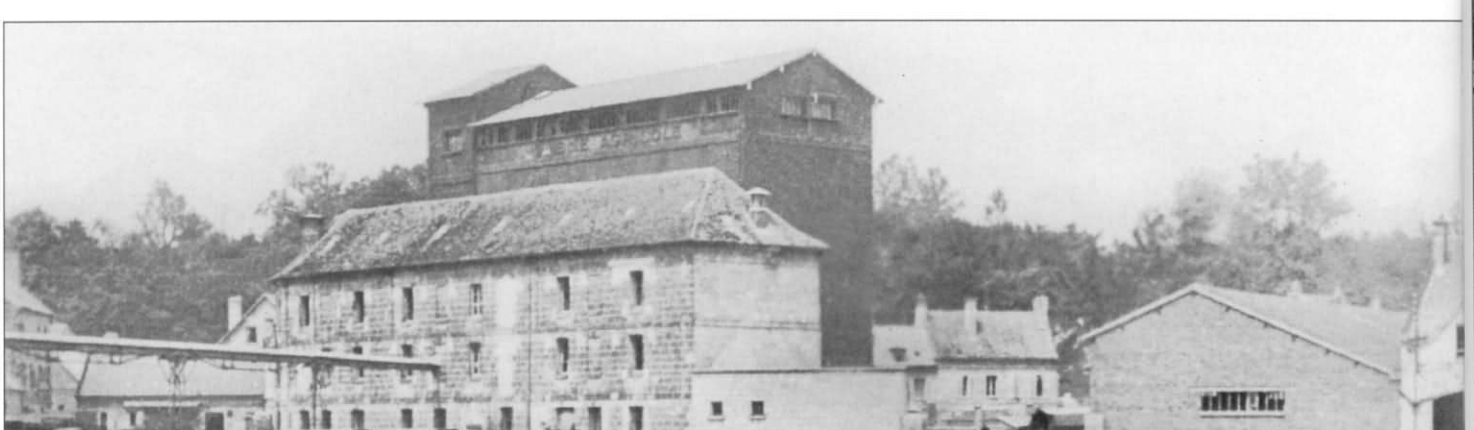
The infamous Pz.Kpfw.IV "321" in the early evening of June 5 after being quickly repaired, as it crashes through the wall surrounding the Chateau du Quesnoy. The photo shows that the tactical marking also appeared on the turret rear below the cupola bulge, as well as a national cross. It is suspected that the action shown in this photo was in fact a staged event that took place after the actual battle was over.

Photographs taken during an advance by Pz.Rgt.25 of 7.Panzer-Division on June 5 or June 6 after crossing the Somme. Pz.Kpfw.38(t) from the first company can be seen in this photograph, with second platoon tanks "123" and "124" in the foreground. It would appear that the photographer was in an Sd.Kfz.263 (8 rad) armored car based on the portion of the frame antennae and MG34 in the foreground.

In the second photo are 3rd company Panzer 38(t)s, with a Pz.Kpfw.II also visible. The divisional insignia is faintly visible on the glacis plate of the 38(t) to the right.

Vehicles from 7.Panzer-Division halt in a field in early June. The commander of Pz.Rgt.25, Oberst Karl Rothenburg, is seen in the lower picture, with a Pz.Kpfw.38(t) and Pz.Kpfw.IV in the background. Over his right shoulder is Pz.Kpfw.II "R12", which is clearly seen in the top photo, with many more panzers in the background. The marking on the stowage bin is unidentified. Rothenburg was killed in 1941 during Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia.





Pz.Kpfw.II "614" leads a column of Panzer Is, IIs and a kl.Bef.Pz.Wg.I over a pontoon bridge across the Aisne River. In the background, the second tank is being directed onto the bridge after a considerable gap is left between the vehicles to insure that the capacity of the bridge is not exceeded. French trucks of all makes and models including civilian types are to the left.

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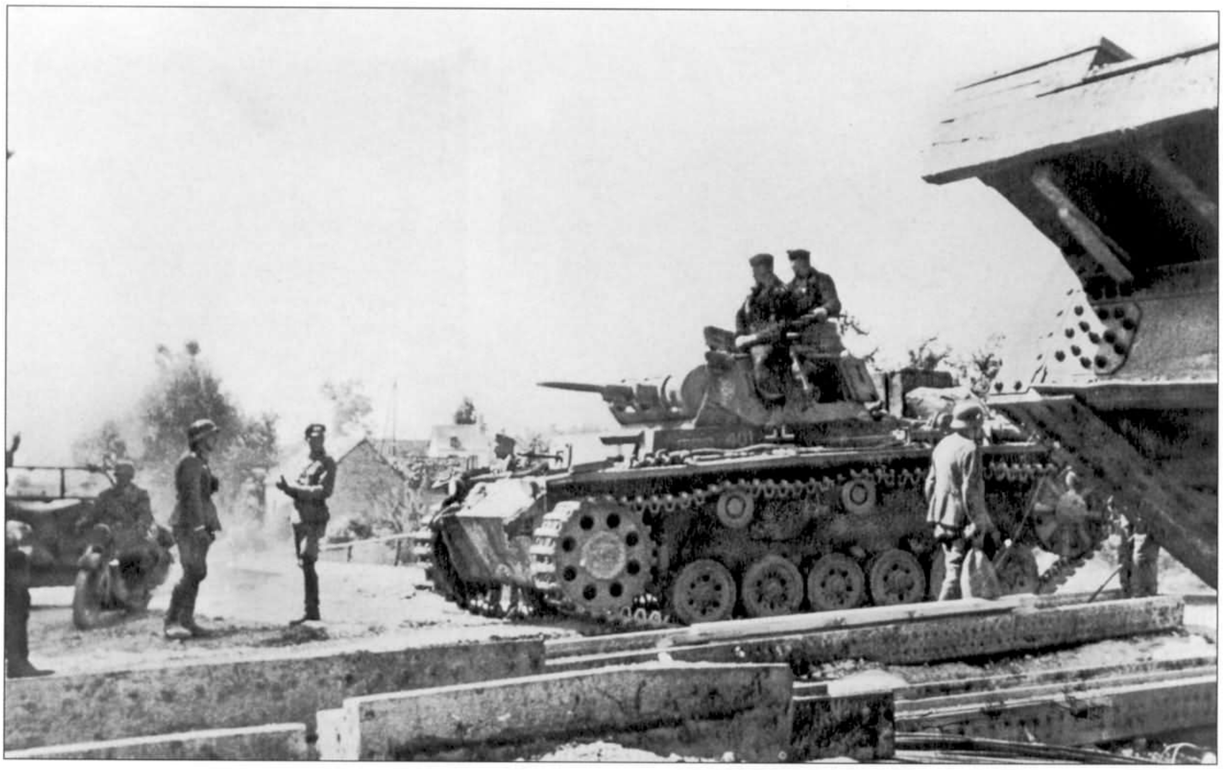
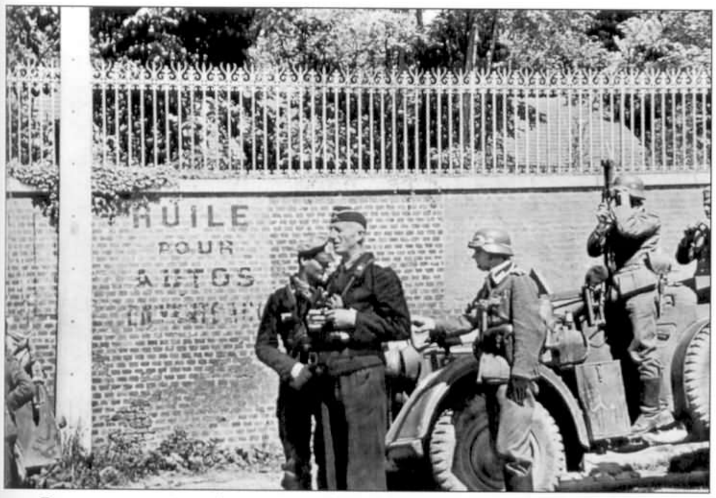
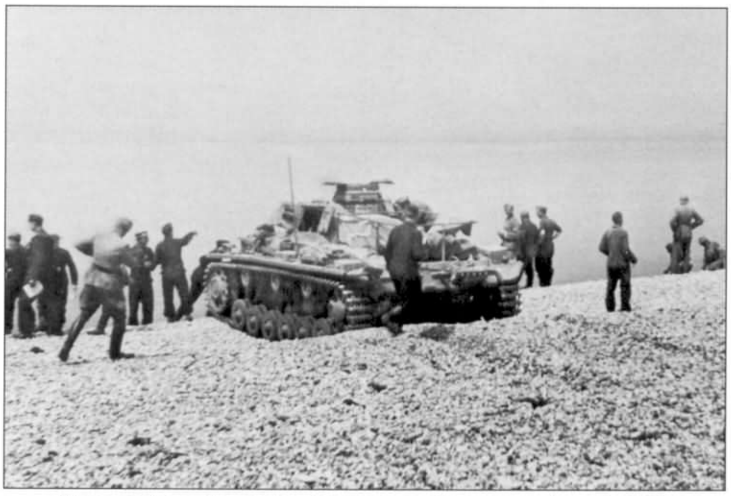
A Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.F from 5.Panzer-Division crosses the Somme at Pont-Remy, on June 5 or June 6. On the turret side is the red devil's head insignia of Pz.Rgt.31, and the tactical number "401" is beside the national cross on the hull side. Other than Pz.Rgt.7 with its bison insignia, Pz.Rgt.31 was the only other regimental unit in Fall Gelb and Fall Rot to use a specific marking. A section of the destroyed road bridge is to the right.

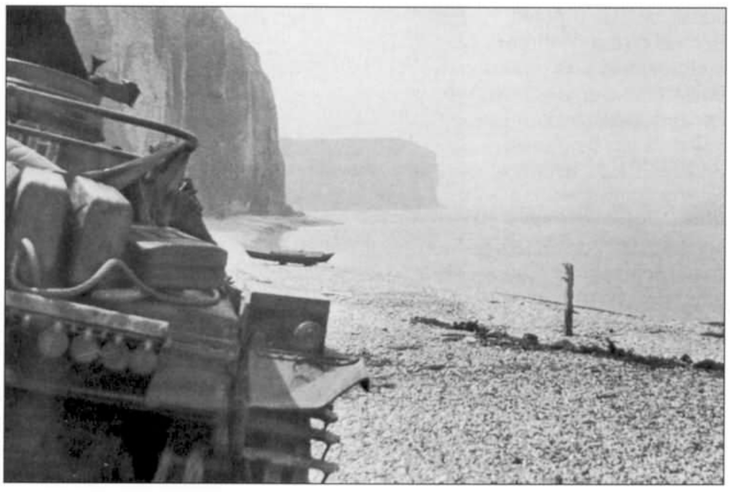




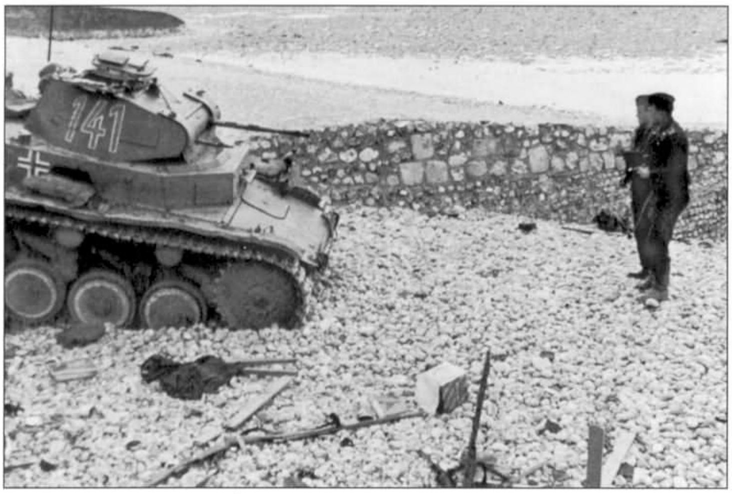
Rouen was entered unopposed on June 9 by 5.Panzer-Division. These officers are watching the activities from the Rue d'Ernemont, an elevated street that provided a good observation point into the city. Clearly visible on the tire chain stowage bin of this Kfz.15 medium passenger car (m. gl. Pkw) is the divisional insignia, while the officer standing beside the tire is resting his arm on the command pennant. The soldier behind him is using an artillery spotting scissors telescope.



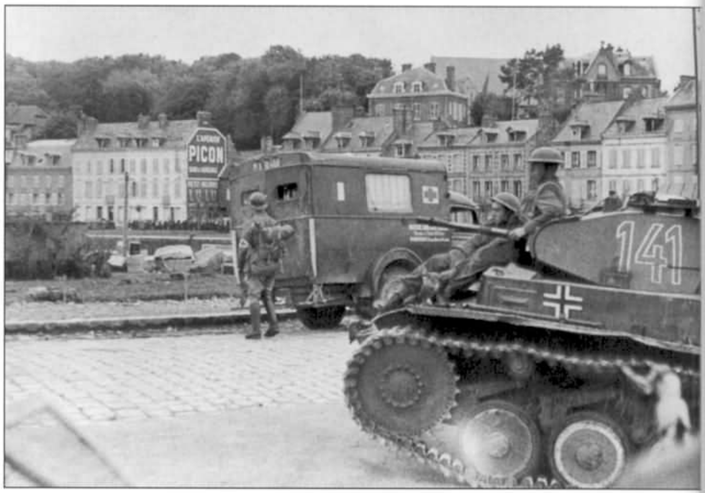
After reaching the Seine River near Rouen on June 9, 7.Panzer-Division turned back to the northwest to block the retreat of the French IXeme Corps d'Armee. An advance party from Pz.Rgt.25 reached the English Channel on June 10 at Les Petites-Dalles, a small seaside hamlet. These two photos show Oberst Rothenburg's Panzerbefehlswagen III Ausf.E that broke through the seawall and advanced down to the water's edge. In the distance can be seen the English coast.



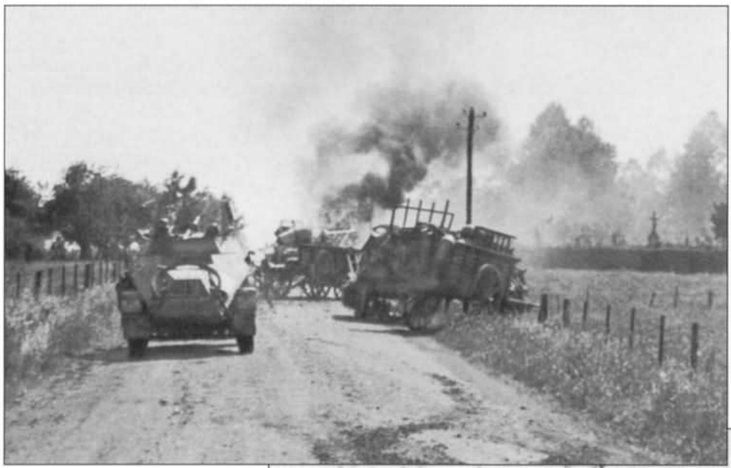
Visible in this photograph is the tactical number "B01" on the turret rear and the frame antenna that was the prominent feature of the Pz.Bf.Wg.III. Of interest is the smoke grenade launcher, which has one round that has been fired.



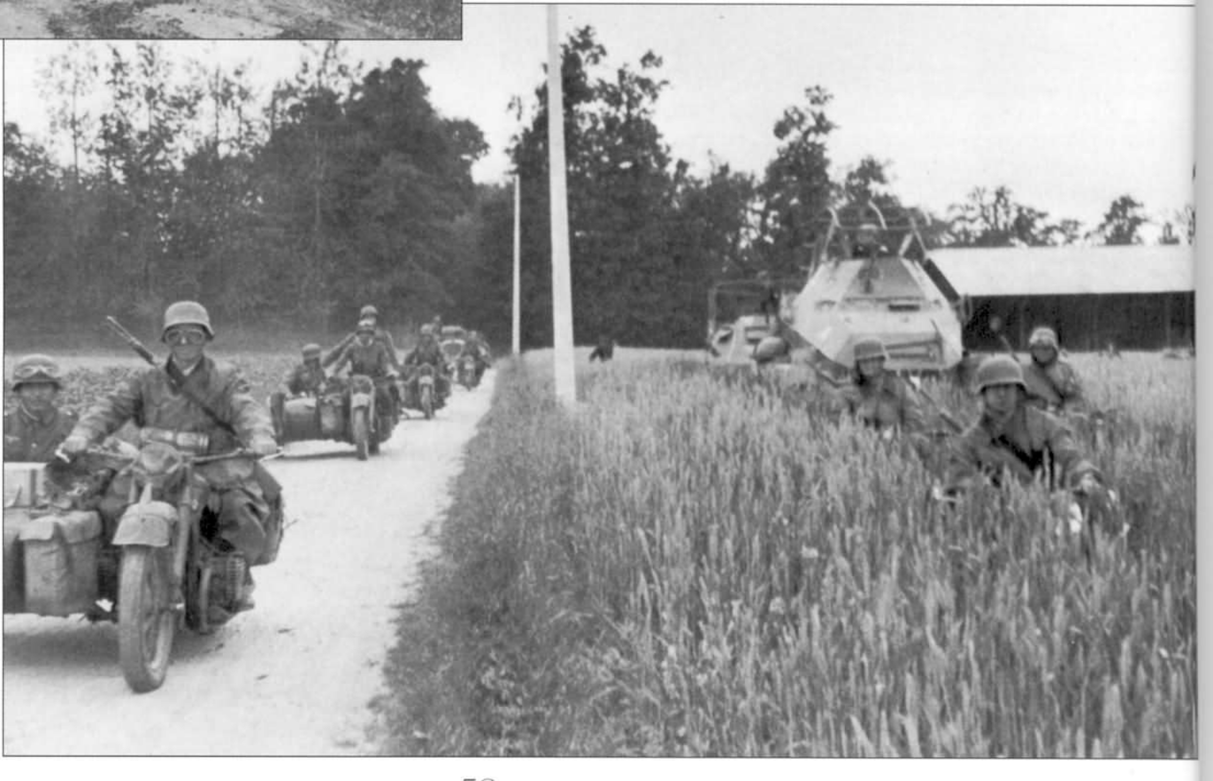
Another 7.Panzer-Division vehicle on the beach at Les Petites-Dalles, this time a Pz.Kpfw.II. It appears that the crew attempted to cross a seawall and the tank has become bogged down in the shingle. Shingle, basically small pebbles and stones, was poor terrain for tanks and difficult to traverse. This was discovered by the Canadians in 1942 during the ill-fated raid at Dieppe, when numerous Churchills became stuck on the shingle beach and were easily destroyed by the German defenders. This vehicle has been up-armored on the turret and hull front. It also carries an unusual fitting over the turret periscope, possibly for mounting an MG34 for anti-aircraft use.



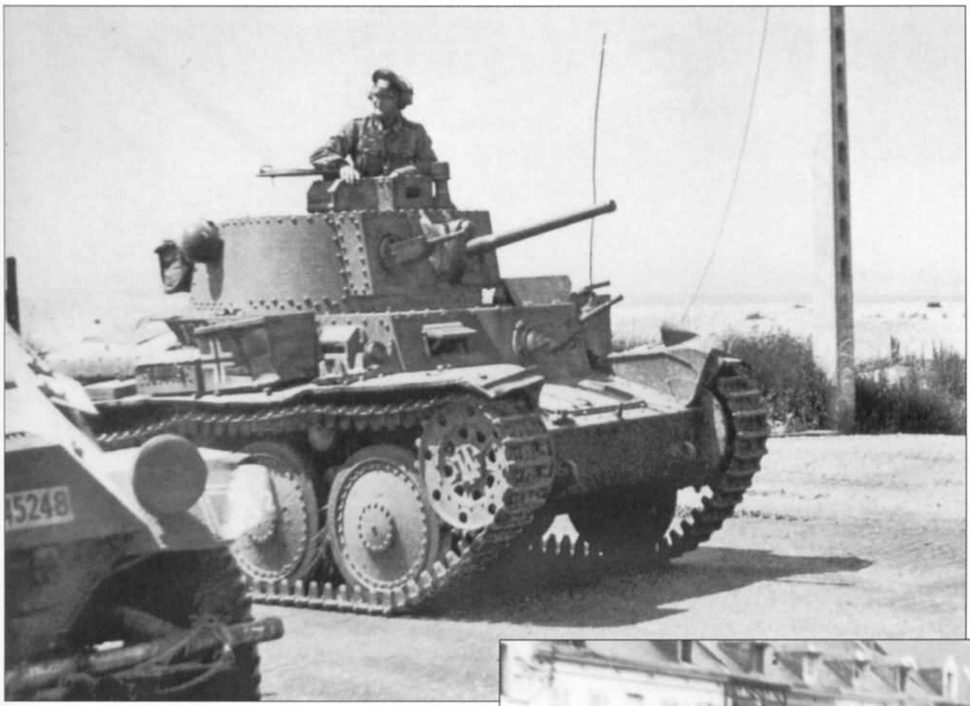
A second photograph of Pz.Kpfw.II "141" taken in Saint-Valery-en-Cau a few kilometers up the coast from Les Petites-Dalles, possibly on June 1 This harbor was to be used as an evacuation point for the IXeme Corp d'Armee but the Germans arrived too quickly and only small numbers wer evacuated. Two British soldiers, of which only a few units were in the are are sitting on the Panzer II, while a French medic walks toward an Renau AFB2 ambulance displaying a French registration plate above the rear doo the "M" signifying vehicles built between 1938 and the beginning of 194 What is particularly unusual about "141" is the different style of the numer "4" on the turret, as opposed to the one shown in the previous picture. Th national cross also has two different lengths of vertical legs and a blac outline, and the divisional insignia is seen further back on the superstructur



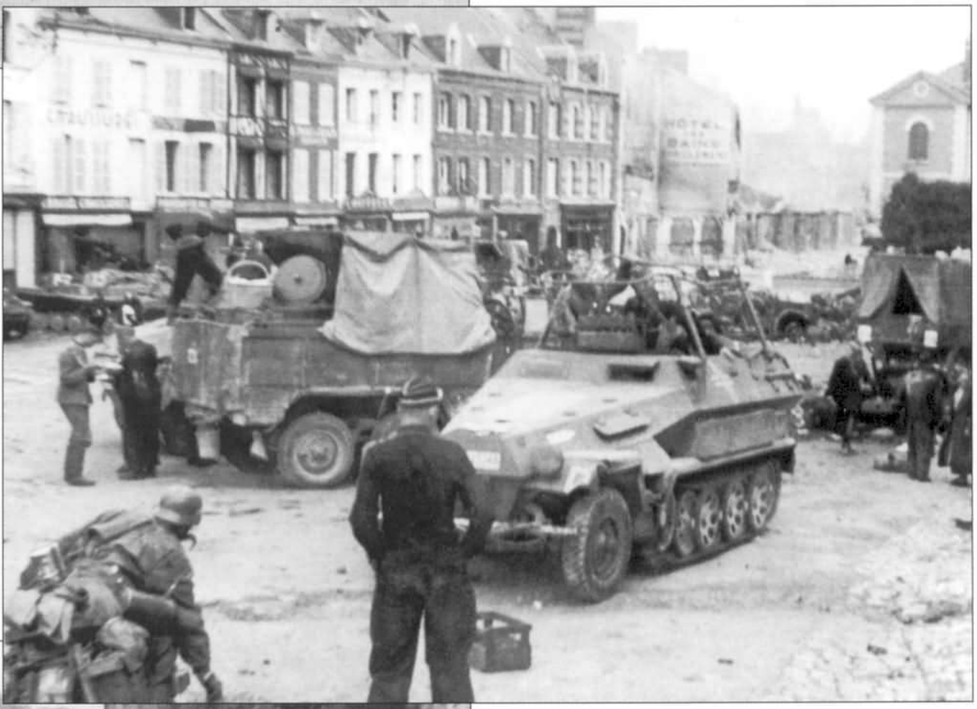
A photograph taken from the passenger seat of a car as an Sd.Kfz.22 advances past an abandoned horse drawn column. The crew of the armore car has the turret cover screens open to allow a clear view of the activitie ahead. National crosses are visible on the rear ventilation grille and bot sides of the body. These vehicles may be part of 7.Panzer-Division during i advance to Saint Valery-en-Caux on June 11.



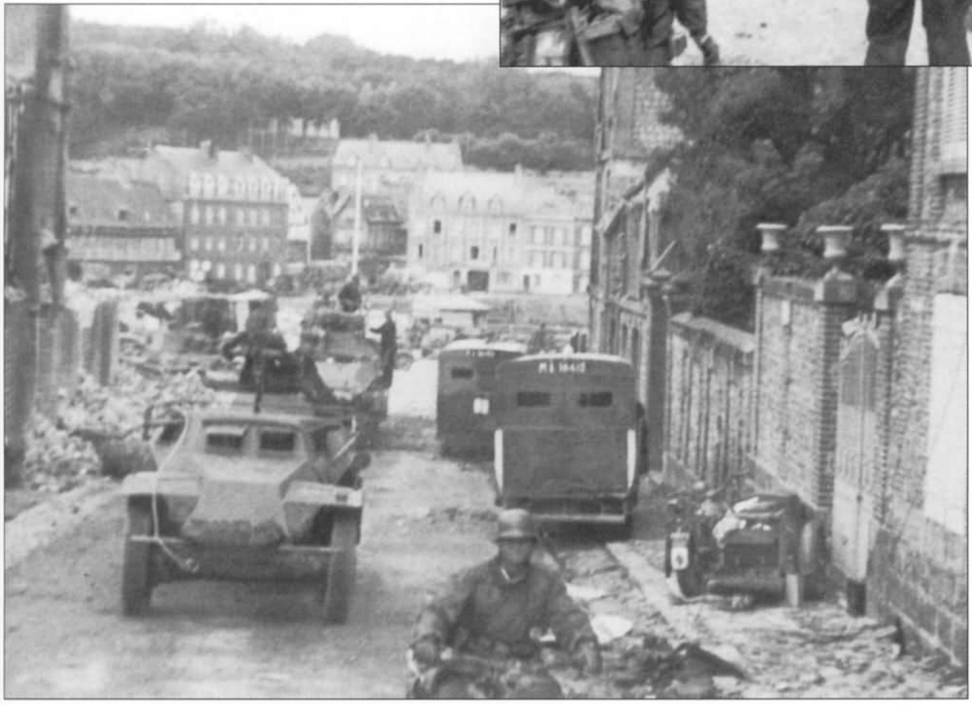
A column of Kradschützen riding BMW R-12 motorcycle combinations pass elements of the 7.Panzer-Division command group in a field of tall grass. Behind the three motorcyclists is an Sd.Kfz.263 Panzerfunkwagen, followed by an Sd.Kfz.223 leichter Panzerspähwagen (Fu). Visible on both sides of the 8-wheeled armored car is the letter "A", which was used on Rommel's personnel 263 armored car, although it may have been a common marking within the Divisional Stab (headquarters) unit.



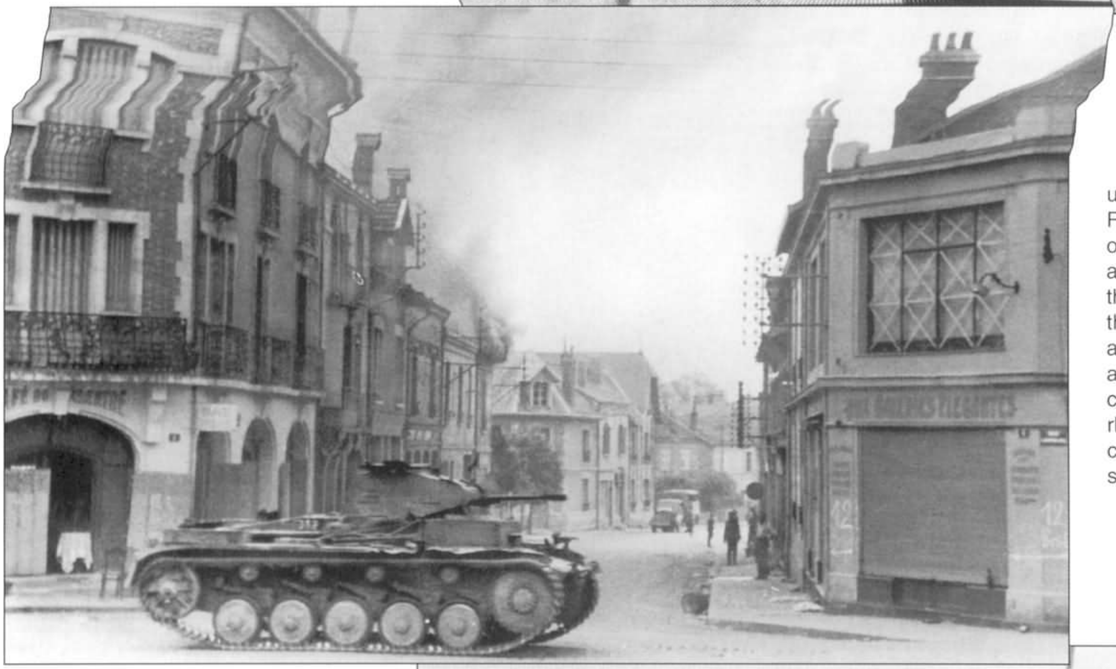
Elements of 7.Panzer-Division advance along the French coast in the Saint Valery-en-Caux area. Of particular interest on this Pz.Kpfw.38(t) is its lack of the large red and white tactical numbers commonly seen on the turrets of 7.Panzer-Division tanks. Instead, the number, possibly "134", is painted in yellow on the standard black rhomboid plate behind the stowage bin. The divisional insignia is barely visible in front of the national cross. To the left is an Sd.Kfz.251 Ausf.A or B halftrack with a white tactical marking for a signals platoon, with a small "2" that probably indicates the 2nd vehicle in the platoon.



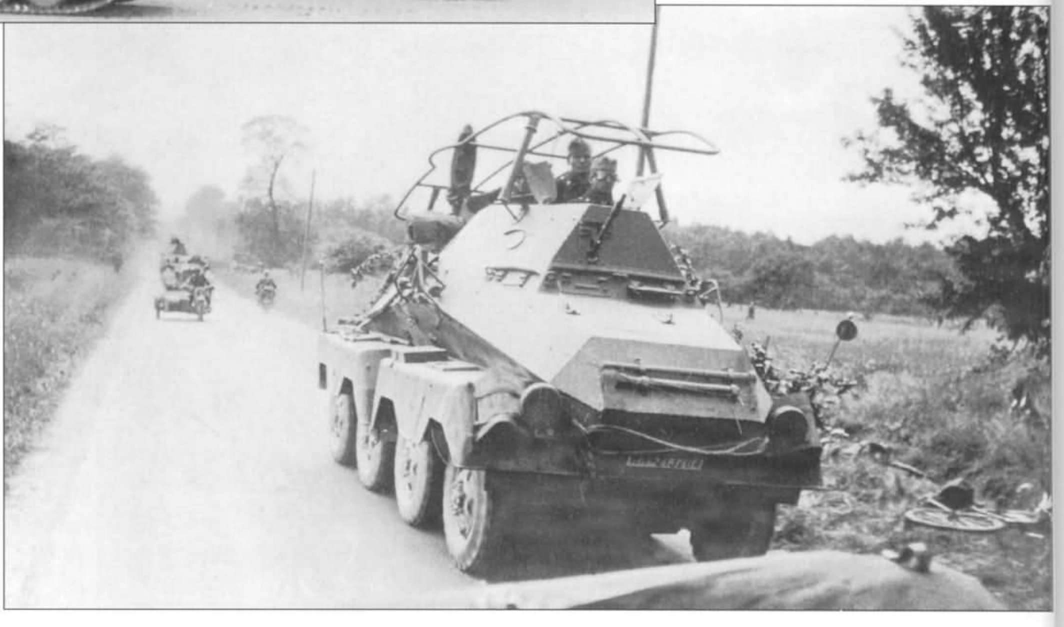
Masses of vehicles and men in Saint Valery-en-Caux after the French surrender on June 12. In the immediate foreground is an Sd.Kfz.251/3 or /6 Ausf.A with a Krupp Protze truck behind it and Pz.Kpfw.IIs lined up along the buildings. The halftrack has a white air recognition rectangle painted on the hood and an unidentified marking on the side in front of the open ventilation hatch. The surrender cost the Allies dearly, as over 46,000 men were taken prisoner and captured equipment included 58 tanks, 1,133 trucks, 56 guns and numerous small arms.



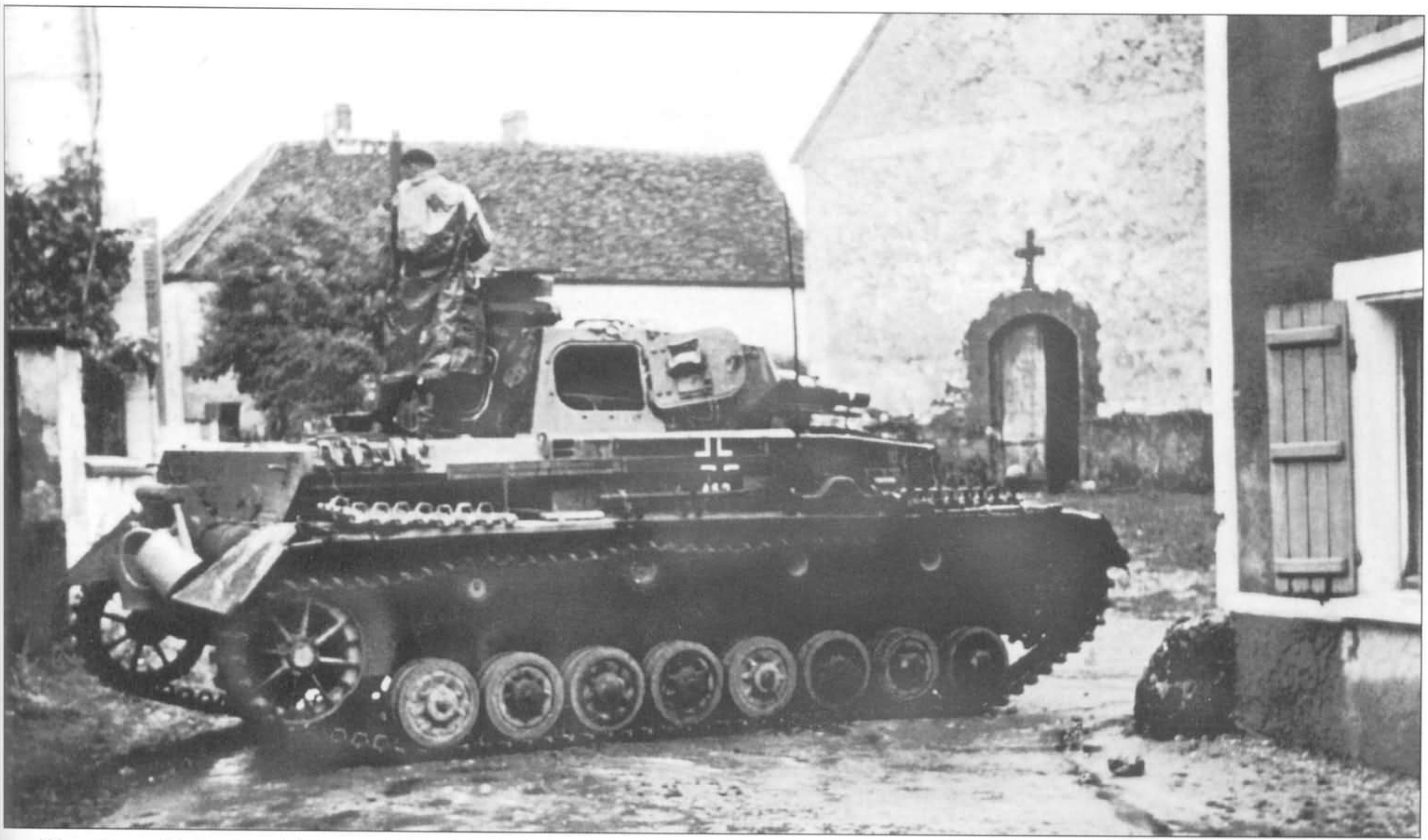
The events surrounding the fighting and capture of Saint Valery-en-Caux provided many opportunities for the Wehrmacht's Propaganda units to exploit this victory. This final picture taken in the town shows an Sd.Kfz.223 with a white tactical number "215" on its turret leading what appears to be an Sd.Kfz.263 down a street past a couple of abandoned Renault AFB2 vans. In front of the trucks is a Gnome & Rhone motorcycle sidecar combination with a tactical marking on its fender that was common for French softskin vehicles. In this case it is a red diamond on a white square, the diamond denoting reconnaissance troops and the color probably signifying the particular company. Other symbols used included a triangle for artillery and a circle for the supply and support units.



A Pz.Kpfw.II passes through an unidentified French town during Fal Rot. It would seem that censors have obliterated the turret tactical number but a very small portion of it remains below the turret vision port. It appears to be the red and white style commonly associated with 7.Panzer-Division, although this is unconfirmed. It also carries a tactical number "312" on a rhomboid plate on the hull side. A few civilians are milling around on the street.

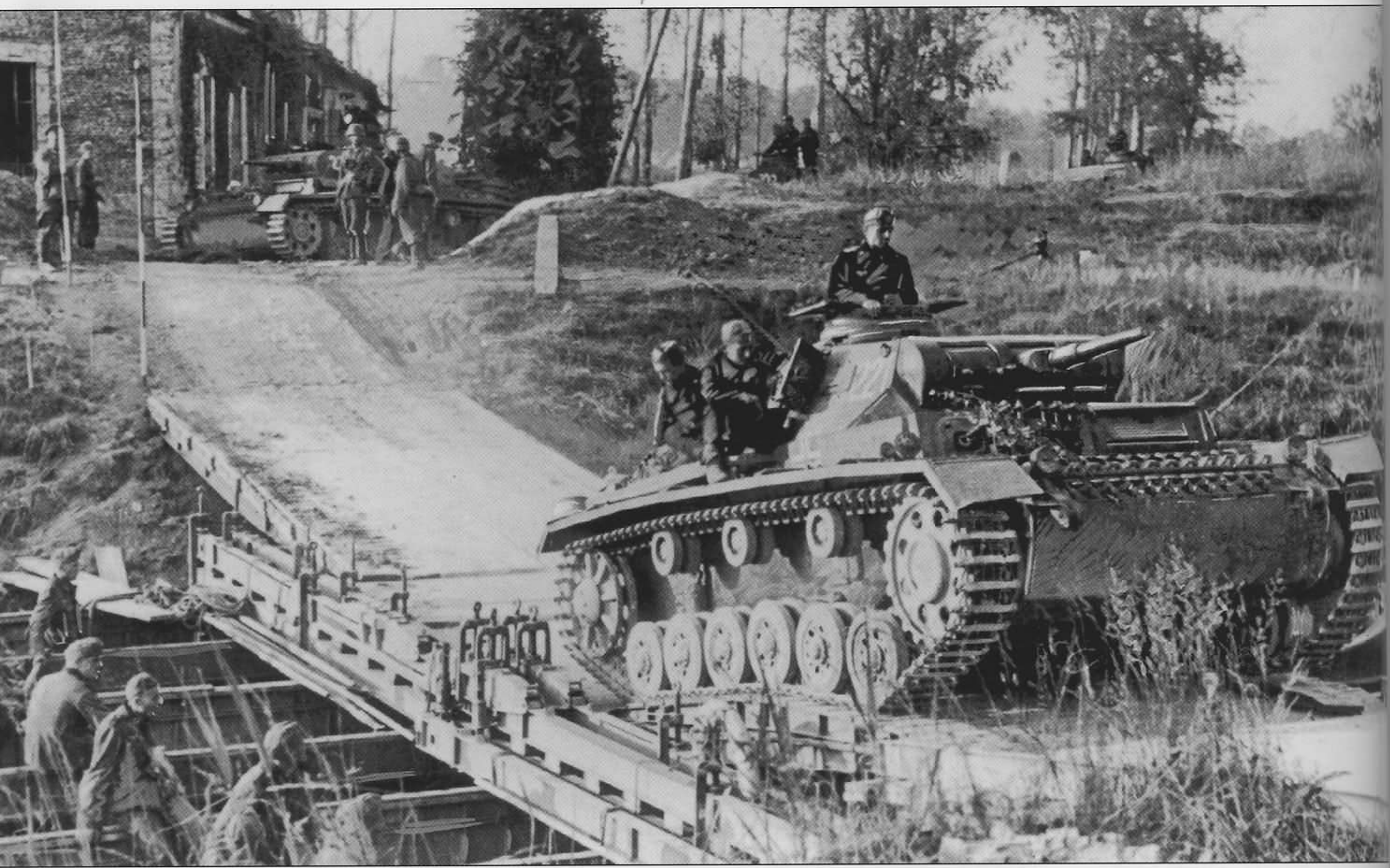


An Sd.Kfz.263 moves south of Paris on June 14, the same day that the first German troops entered the city. As well as the prominent frame antenna, the Panzerfunkwagen was equipped with a mast antenna that was extendable to nine meters and deployed when in static position to considerably increase the range of its radio equipment. The retracted mast is visible here under its protective cover, where the frame aerial "bows" out to accommodate it. No markings are visible other than its license plate "WH 213204". The commander is wearing a set of goggles for protection.

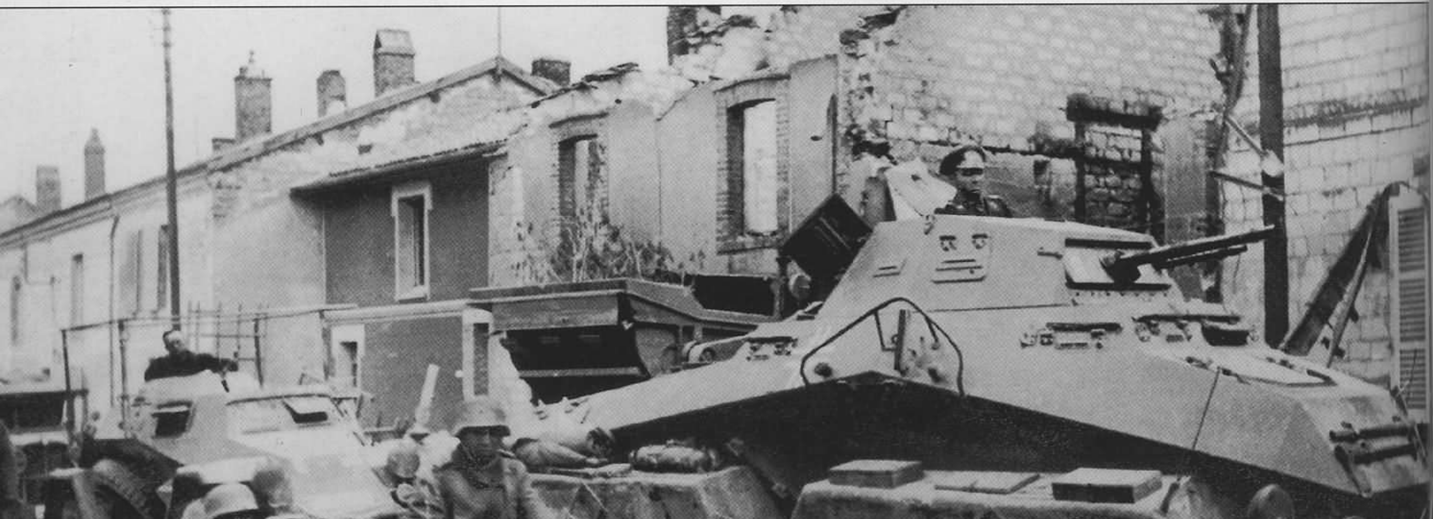


Although no divisional markings are visible, this Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.B is from 3.Panzer-Division. It is parked on a street in Chateau-Thierry, sometime between June 12 and June 14 after the Marne River was bridged by 25.Infantrie-Division on June 11. Portions of the white outline tactical numbers can be seen on the turret rear and below the open turret door. The crewman is wearing a waterproof motorcyclist's coat.

An Sd.Kfz.251 halftrack advances through Breteuil with a full complement of infantry. The original caption states that the photograph was taken on June 15, which would indicate that the scene has probably been staged for propaganda purposes, as the fighting had long since moved on by this time. These soldiers are from 9. or 10.Schützen-Brigade, the motorized infantry unit from 9. or 10.Panzer-Division. The tactical symbol is to the left of the rear doors with a large "6" to indicate the company, while the opposite side displays the familiar "K" for Gruppe von Kleist.



Throughout the invasion of France and the Low Countries, the Pionieren (engineers) of the numerous Pionier-Bataillons were kept constantly busy onstructing bridges across the numerous waterways. Here, a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.E with tactical number "221" crosses a small river in June 1940 while three ore wait their turn. Two red and white striped poles have been driven into the ground to assist the tank drivers in lining their vehicles up straight with the pproach span. The next tank in line, tactical number "212", appears in another photograph from this sequence crossing the bridge, seen in Concord #7033 Panzer-Division 1935-45 (1) The Early Years 1935-41".



An Sd.Kfz.231 (8 Rad) and Sd.Kfz.223 pause in a heavily damaged French town while a BMW R12 motorcycle sidecar combination passes by. Most arkings are obscured except for the national cross on the lead armored car but the divisional insignia of 6. or 7.Panzer-Division is just visible on the front f the radio car. The commander of the 8-wheeled armored car is wearing the Schirmmutze or officers peaked service cap.

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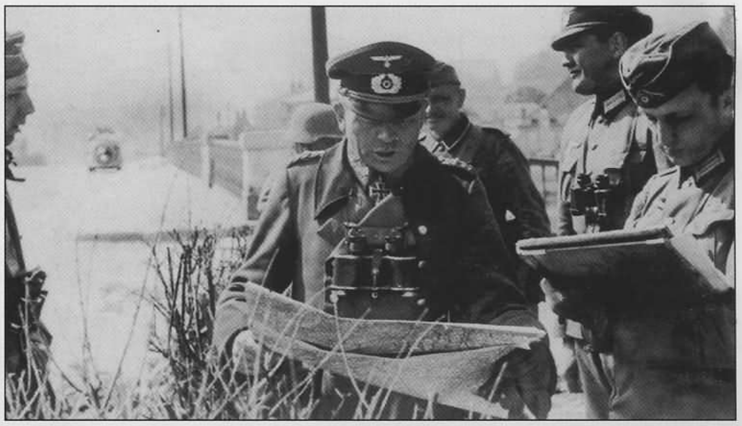
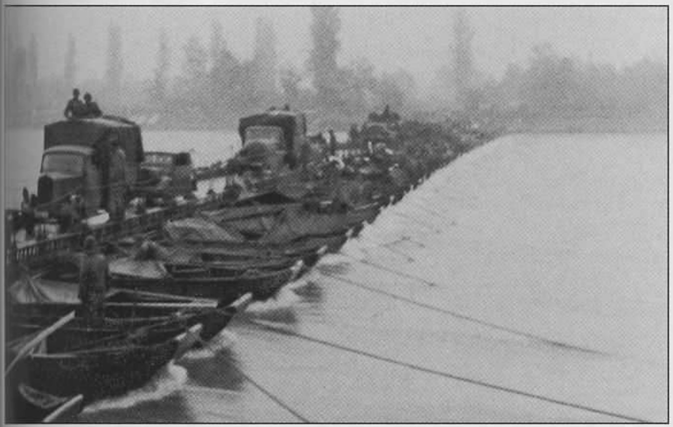
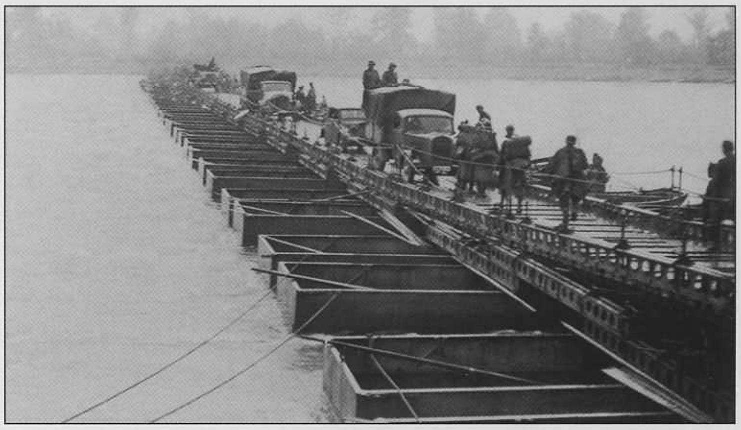
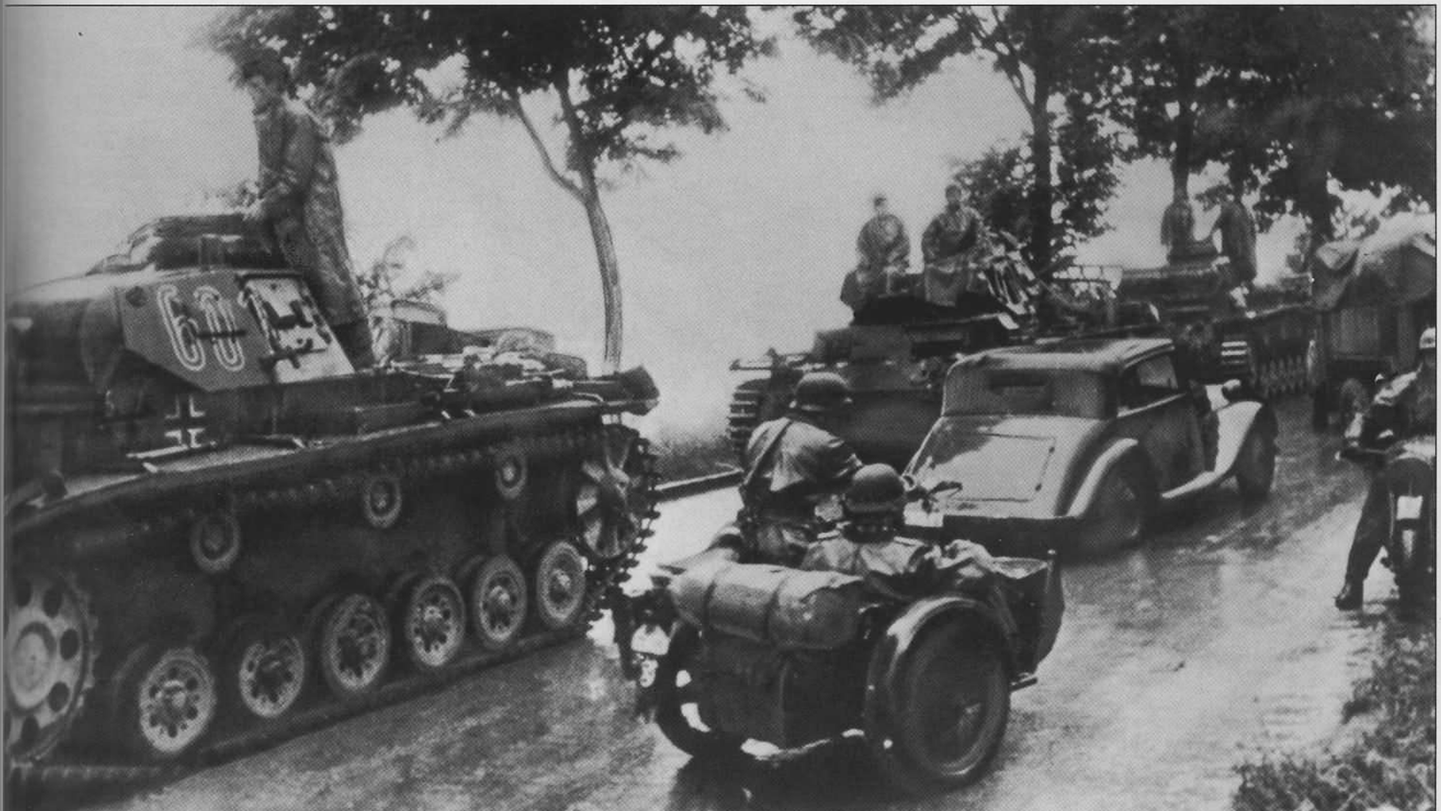
General Hienz Guderian confers with his staff in Langres sometime after June 15, where his command post was established for the final days of Fall Rot. After commanding the XIX.Panzerkorps (1., 2., 10.Panzer-Divisions), subordinated to Panzergruppe von Kleist for Fall Gelb, Guderian was given his own command within 12.Armee for Fall Rot. Designated Panzergruppe Gruderian, it consisted of the XXXIX.Pz.K. (1. and 2.Pz.Div.) and the XLI.Pz.K. (6. and 8.Pz.Div.). Advance units reached the Swiss border on June 17, Guderian's 52nd birthday.



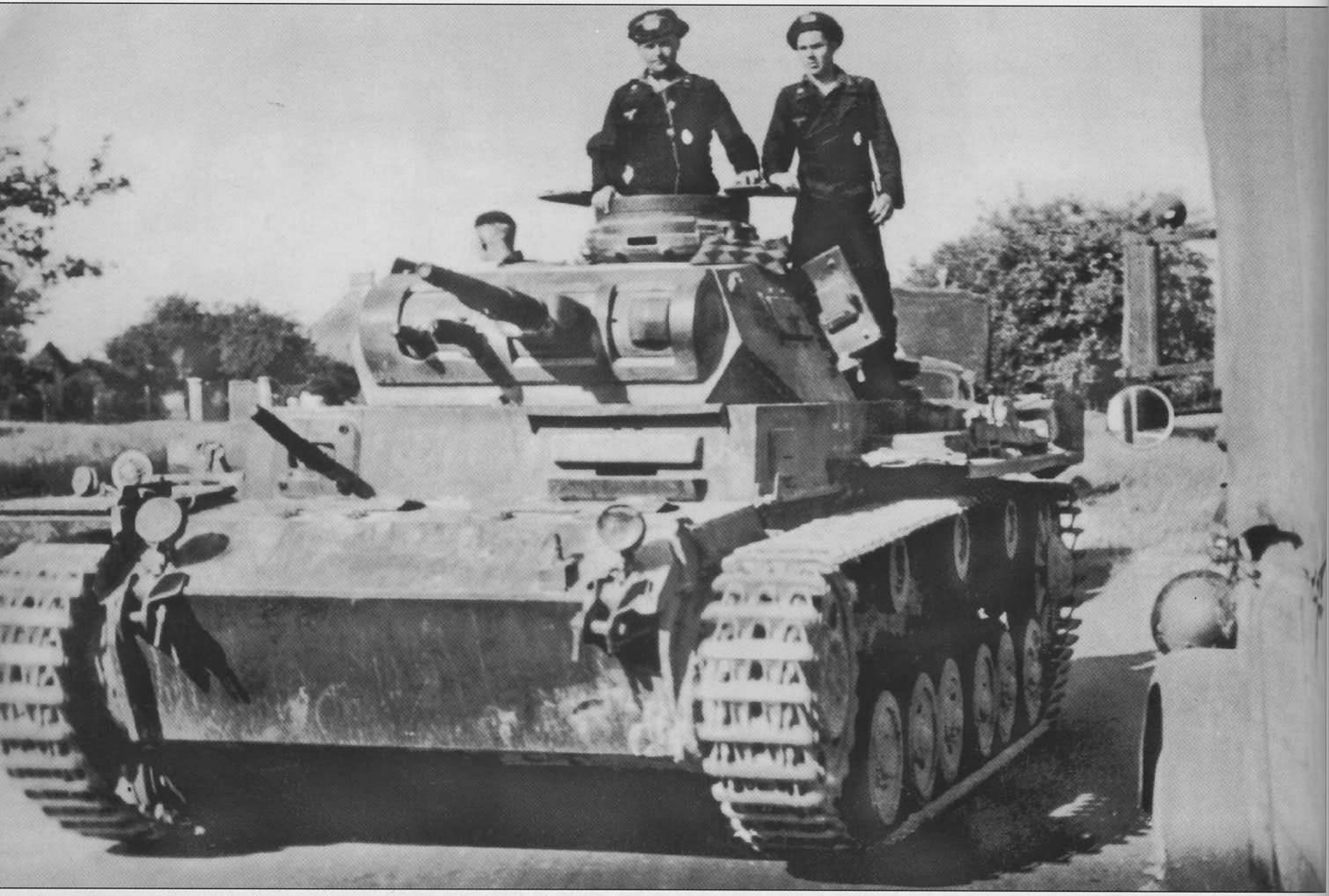




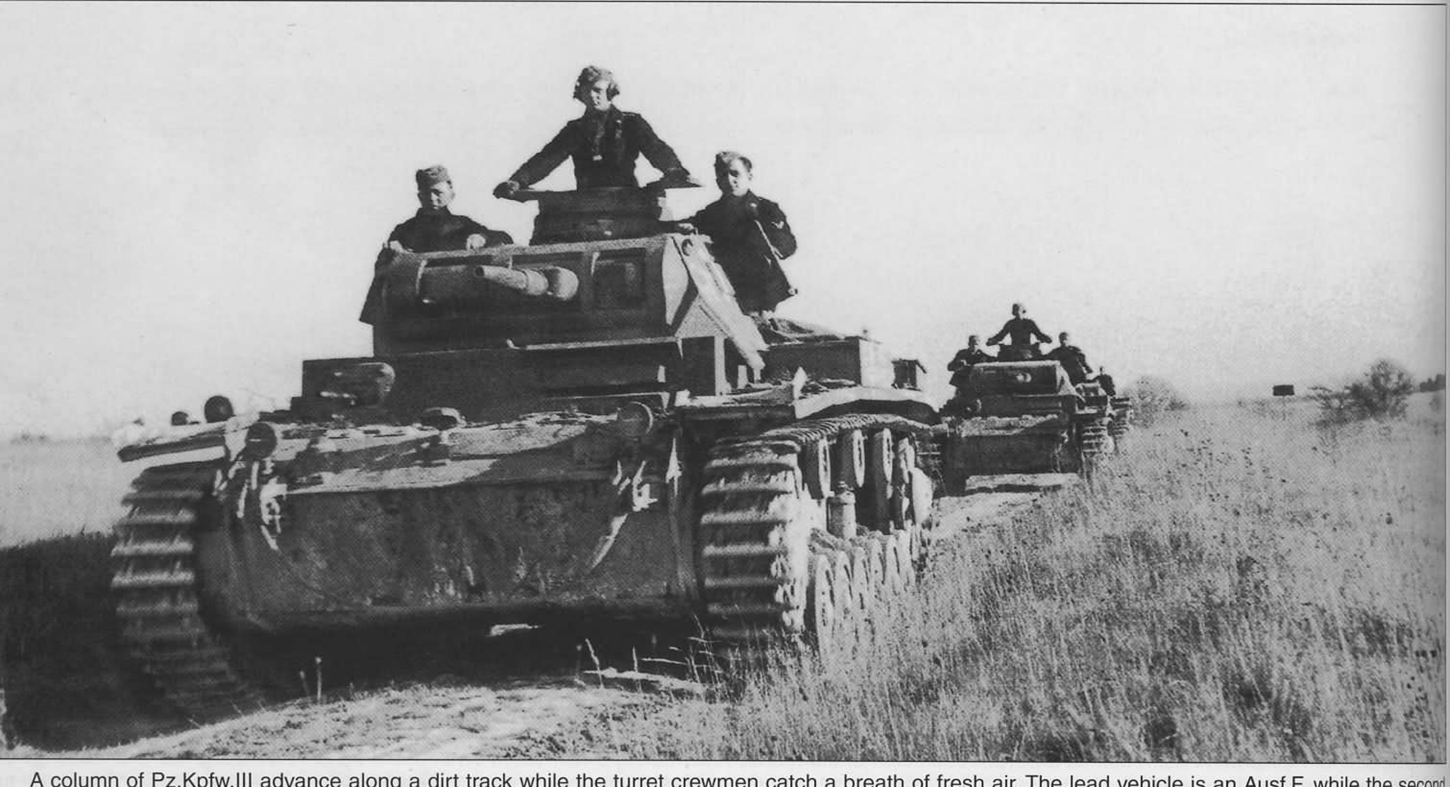
Two photographs taken from both sides of a pontoon bridge as support vehicles cross. At least three French prisoners are in front of the lead truck in the second photograph. The German engineer units were equipped with numerous types of bridging equipment and were capable of constructing bridges and ferries of varying capacities. The structure seen here is a Bruckengerat B and probably rated at 16 tons. The exact location of this photograph is unconfirmed but it would appear to be one of the bridges constructed across the Rhine in mid-June when the 218., 221., and 239.Infanterie-Divisions assaulted the Maginot Line during Operation "Kleiner Bar".



A column of Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.F halt on a paved road south of the Marne River during a rain storm on or about June 16. Although no unit markings are visible on any of the vehicles, the car displays a "K" for Gruppe von Kleist on its trunk lid, so the panzers are probably from 3.Panzer-Division based on the style of turret numbers. The first tank carries number "601" in white outline, which is repeated on a black rhomboid plate in front of the national cross. A tactical sign for a motorcycle platoon is on the rear fender of the BMW combination in the foreground.



The 9.Panzer-Division insignia is just visible on this Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.E as it advances on the Loire River during the final phase of Fall Rot in mid-June. he 9.Panzer-Division was the only armored unit to be involved in the invasion of Holland and was transferred to France after the Dutch capitulation on May 5. For Fall Rot it was assigned to XIV.Armeekorps, part of Panzergruppe von Kleist. The vehicle has suffered some considerable damage, having lost half s fender and Notek light. All the weapons have dust covers in place and the crew wear the Schutzmutze (literally "protective cap") or beret that was commonly een at this stage of the war.



A column of Pz.Kpfw.III advance along a dirt track while the turret crewmen catch a breath of fresh air. The lead vehicle is an Ausf.F, while the second an E model since it is missing the brake cooling air intake covers on the glacis plate. Barely visible on the turret side is the stenciled bison insignia of 0.Panzer-Division's Pz.Rgt.7. A national cross is located on the field fitted stowage box mounted on the fender.

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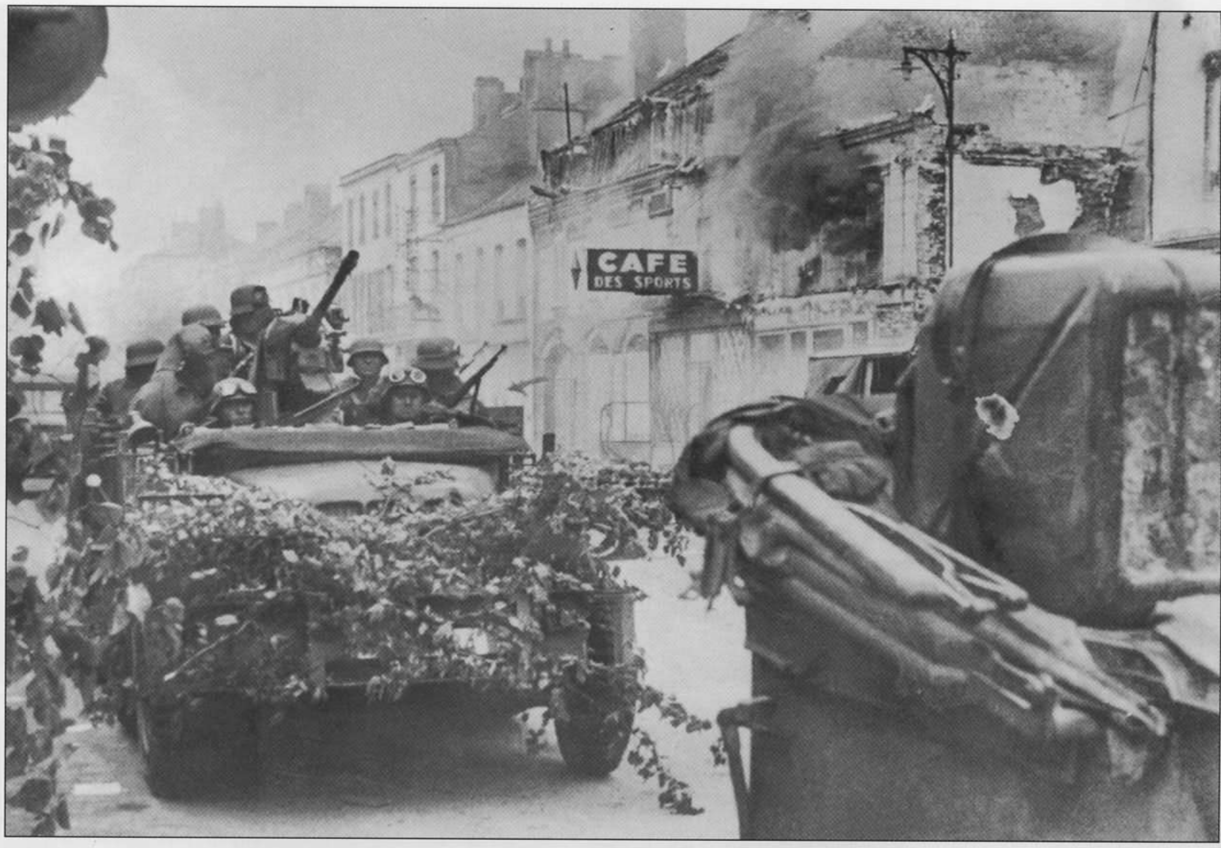
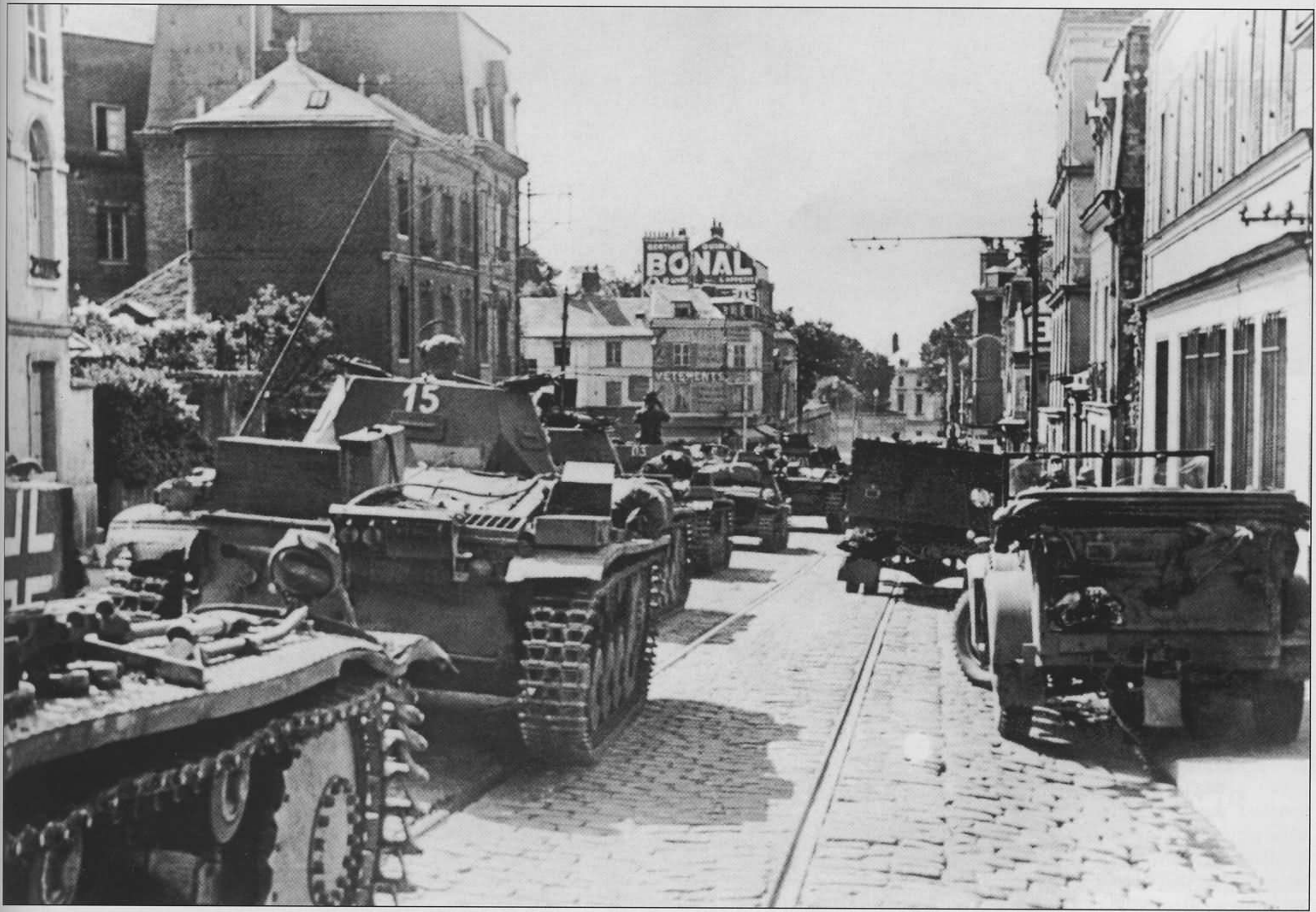
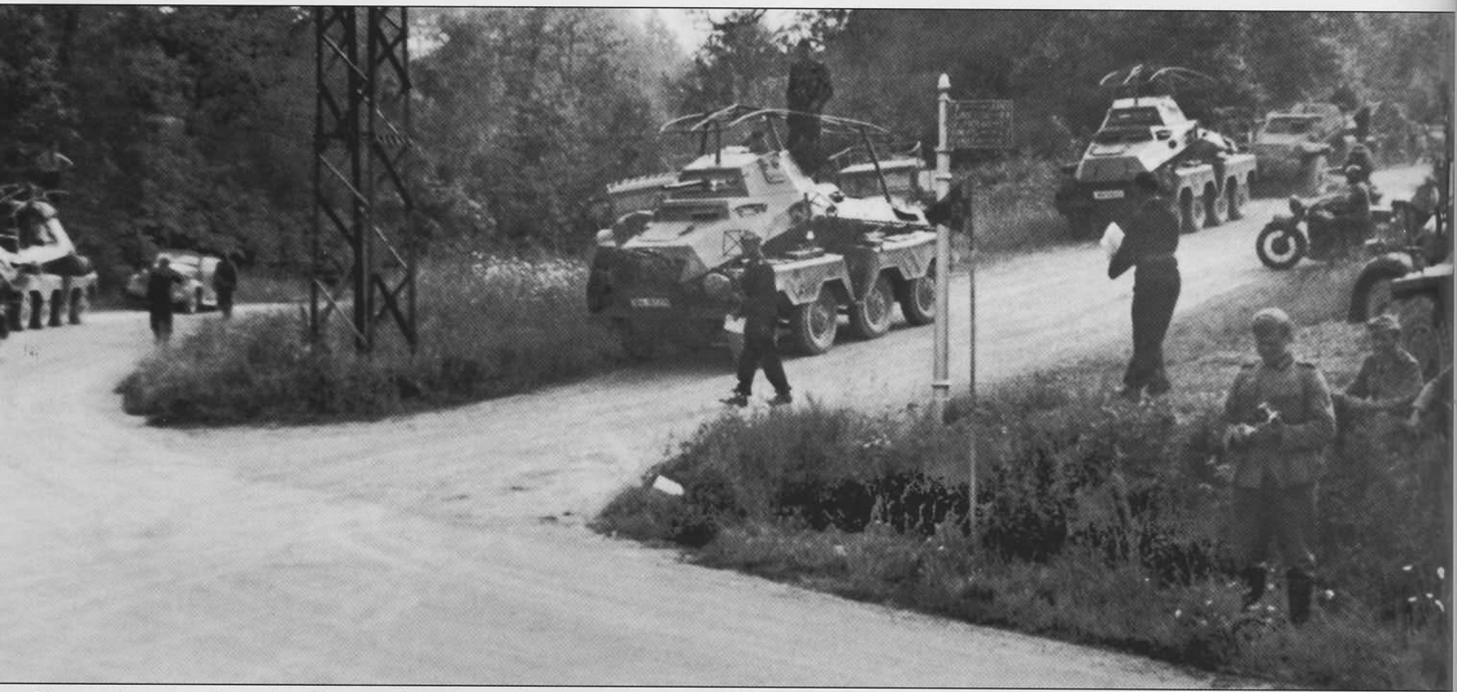
An Sd.Kfz.10/4 passes through a French town in mid-June. These 1-ton halftracks mounted 2cm Flak 30 anti-aircraft guns and were operated by independent Fliegerabwehr-Bataillon (anti-aircraft battalions) during the 1940 campaign. Self-propelled AA guns such as these were vital to Blitzkrieg tactics, as they were the only units capable of keeping pace with the armored units. Although in general the Luftwaffe ruled the skies during Fall Gelb and Fall Rot, the French and British still had formidable air forces and Wehrmacht ground units were subjected to periodic air attacks. This crew has attached some foliage for camouflage and covered the folded windshield with a tarpaulin to minimize glare.

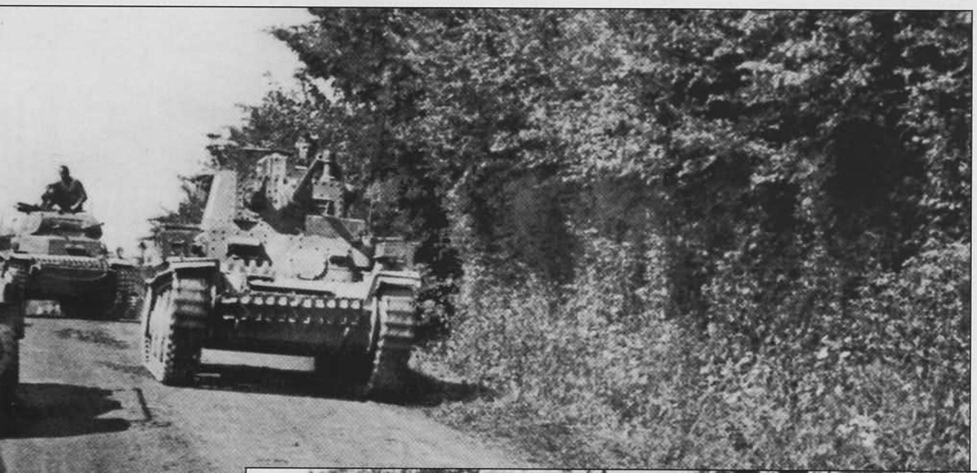




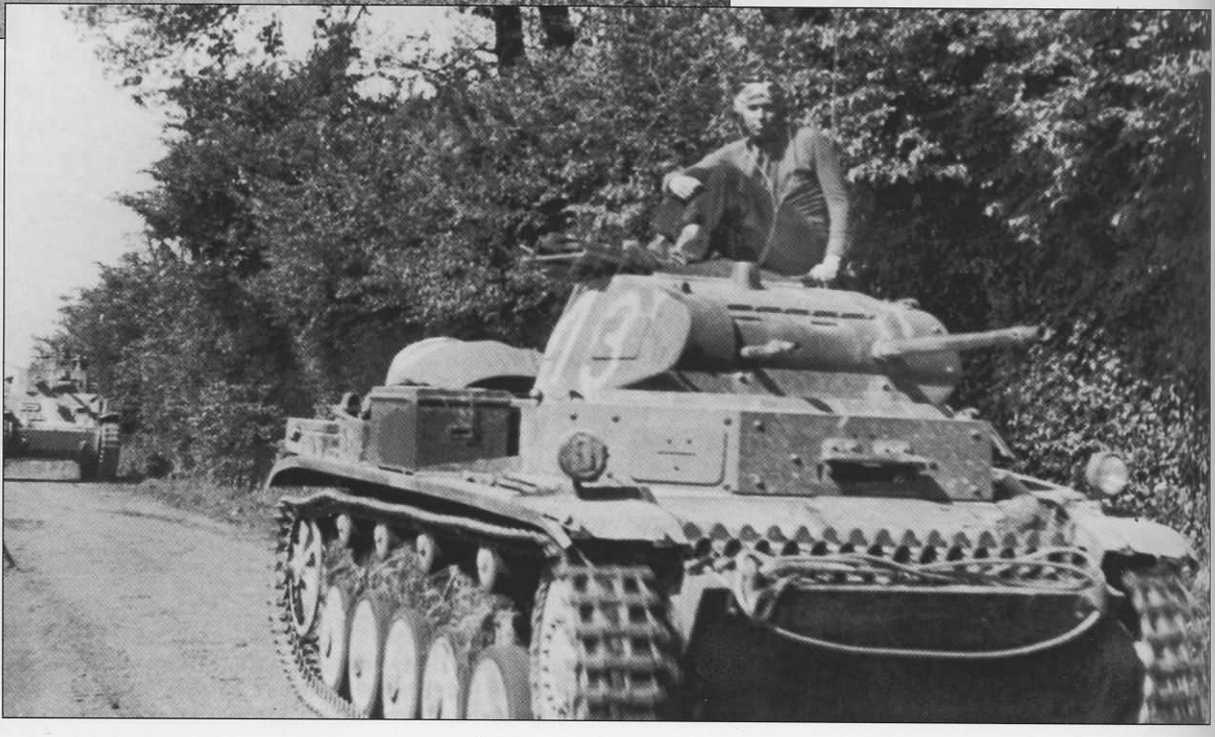
Four Pz.Kpfw.II follow a Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.A and a Pz.Kpfw.III through a French town sometime in June. These tanks are from 5.Panzer-Division, with a yellow elongated rhomboid seen below the turret vision port on the nearest Panzer II with the number "15". "03" can be seen further up the line. The Kfz.15 passenger car and truck appear to be from a Pionier unit based on the tactical sign. The license plates have been censored.



Reconnaissance elements of Rommel's 7.Panzer-Division, presumably from Aufklarüngs Abteilung 37, in the vicinity of Cherbourg on June 18, 1940. n Sd.Kfz.223 with its frame antenna folded down follows two Sd.Kfz.232 (8 Rad) and a Sd.Kfz.263 is to the left. Notice the command pennant frame on the ender of the nearest armored car.



Two photographs taken of a column of 7.Panzer-Division tanks during the advance to Cherbourg sometime around June 18. In the first photograph is a Panzerbefehlswagen 38(t), although it is not equipped with the prominent frame aerial. Its role as a command vehicle is evident by the plated over hull machine-gun port, which was removed to make room for the additional radio equipment. The divisional insignia is barely visible over the radio operator's vision port.



The Pz.Kpfw.II at is seen behind the z.Bf.Wg.38(t) is hown in the second hotograph. The ommander has emoved his black eldjacke to expose the ouse gray shirt, which unusual as the anzer troops still took reat pride in their ppearance at this age of the war. hown to advantage is e additional 20mm rmor plate that was stalled on the lower ull, glacis and turret ont to improve the urvivability of these ehicles. An aerial ecognition flag has een tied to the engine eck over the stowage.

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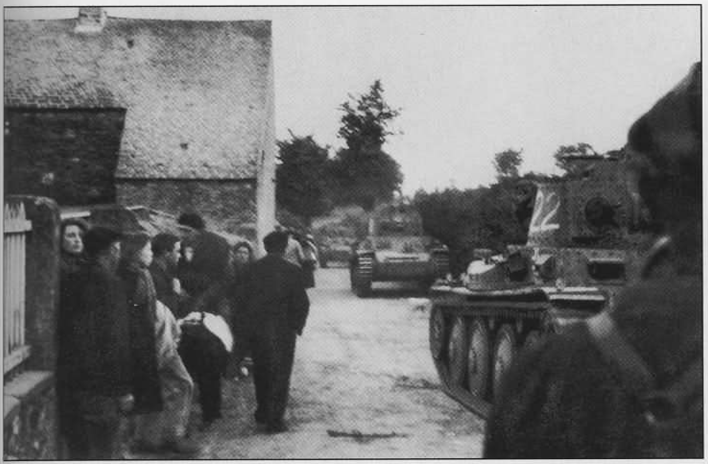
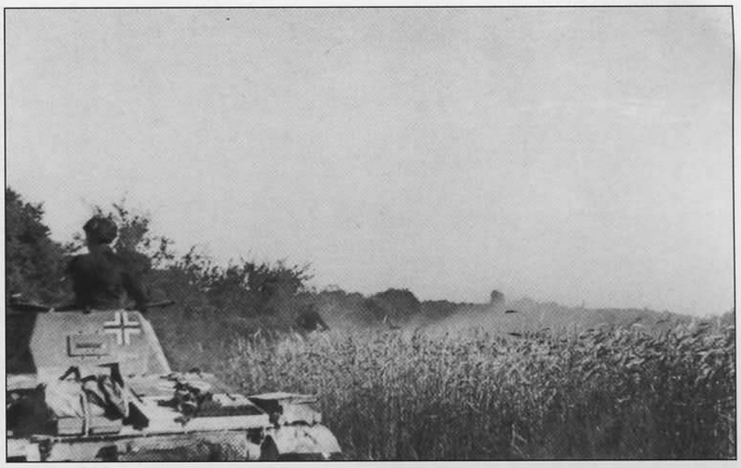
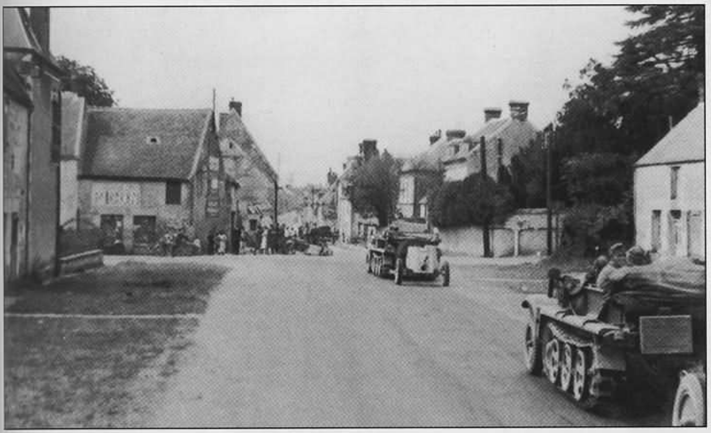


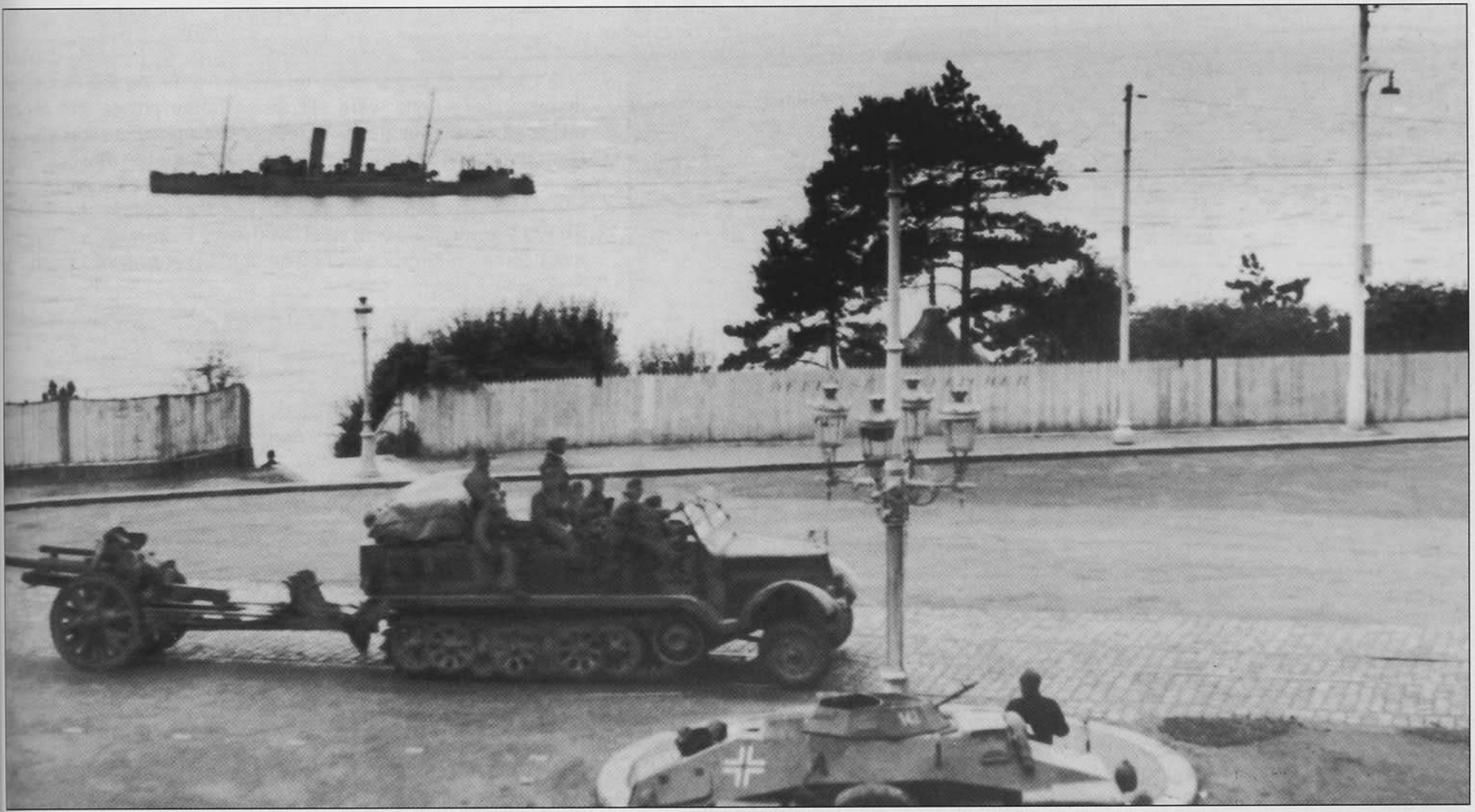
The advance on Cherbourg continues as a column of Pz.Kpfw.38(t)s pass a group of French civilians looking on in disbelief. The nearest tank carries unusual turret numbers that appear to be in solid white and irregularly shaped.



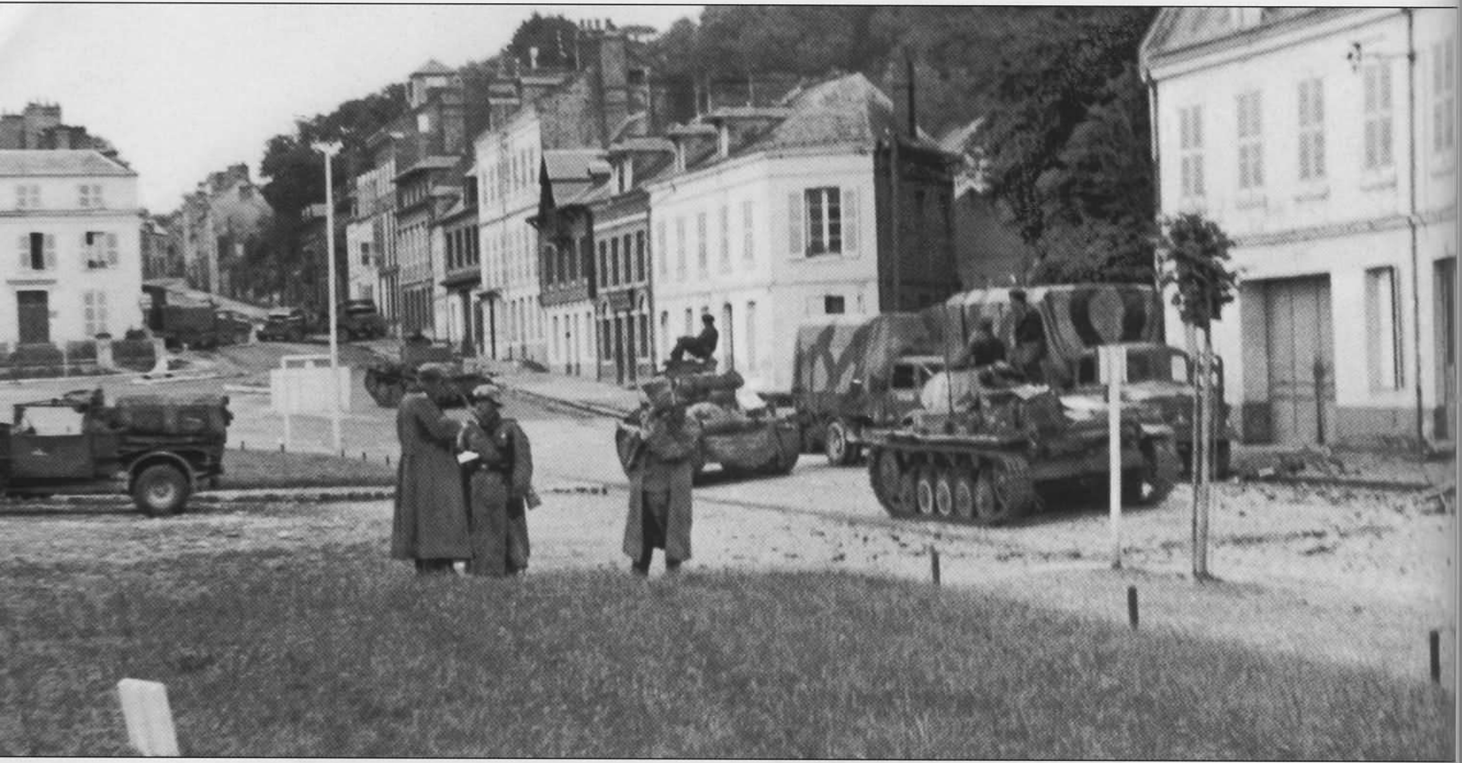
Another column of 7.Panzer-Division tanks moving through a wheat field on the Cotentin Peninsula, heading for Cherbourg. The yellow divisional sign is just below the national cross on the turret of this Pz.Kpfw.II and a small flag has been place neatly across the engine deck for aerial recognition. The tank in front is virtually invisible with the exception of its commander and the cross on the turret rear.



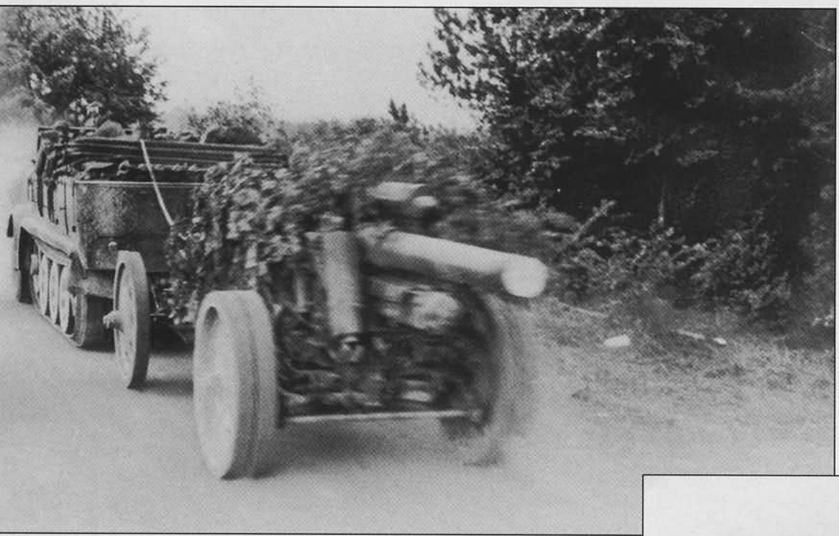
Demag Sd.Kfz.10 halftracks towing 3.7cm Pak 35/36 anti-tank guns somewhere on the outskirts of Cherbourg. Once again, French civilians line the streets, looking on in dismay. A metal carrying case for M1924 stick grenades and fuses has been hung on the rear of the nearest vehicle.



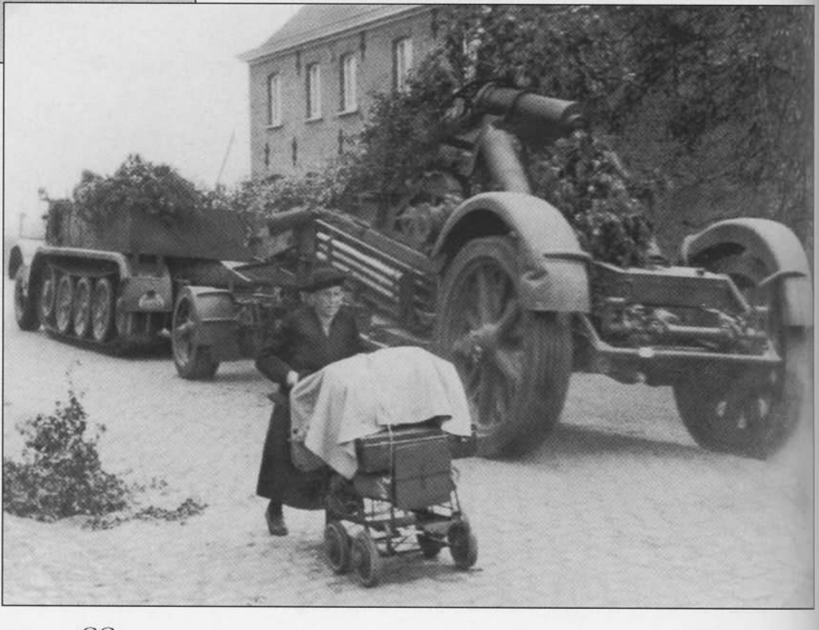
Cherbourg was officially in German hands on June 19, by which time more than 30,000 Allied troops had been evacuated. On the Cherbourg waterfront, a relatively rare Sd.Kfz.6/1 5-ton artillery tractor tows a 10.5 cm leFH 18 past an Sd.Kfz.221 armored car. A solid white tactical number "143" appears on the turret. The ship in the background is of unknown origin, but given the attitude of the soldiers it is most likely a Kriegsmarine vessel and therefore the scene probably took place a few days after the fall of Cherbourg.



Tanks from 7.Panzer-Division on the streets of Cherbourg, with two Pz.Kpfw. 38(t)s leading, followed by a Pz.Kpfw.II. Abandoned British trucks are seemingly parked at random, their former owners evacuated back to England. To the right is what appears to be a Bedford OYD 3 ton, while on the left a Humber or Bedford 8cwt General Service is parked along the curb. The trucks further up the road have obviously been positioned to form a makeshift roadblock, now little more than an inconvenience for the invaders.



German heavy artillery on the move during Fall Rot. While many artillery units were still using horse power, the panzer divisions were equipped with mechanized units to allow them to keep pace with the advance. Halftracks were the most common form of motive power for the heavy artillery pieces such as those seen in these two photographs. The first picture is an 8-ton Sd.Kfz.7 towing a 15cm sFH 18 (heavy field howitzer 18), the most common large caliber piece in the Wehrmacht's inventory.



In the second photograph, an 18-ton Sd.Kfz.9 tows the carriage of a 21cm Mörser 18 "Brummbär". This was an extremely large gun, weighing over 3 times as much as the sFH18, and therefore for longer moves, it was broken down into two components, the barrel and the carriage. The Famo 18-ton halftrack, though, was more than capable of pulling it in one piece, as was done for shorter distances. It is interesting to note that both guns have been heavily camouflaged with foliage, as well as the Famo, so the crews must have been somewhat concerned about possible air attacks.

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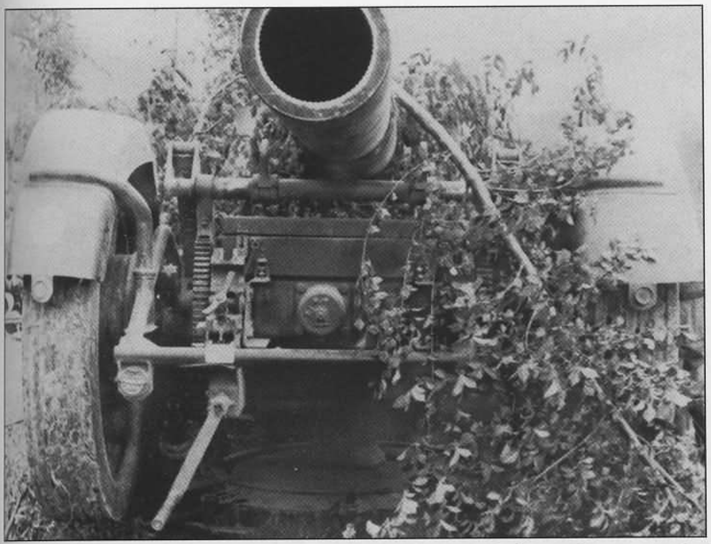
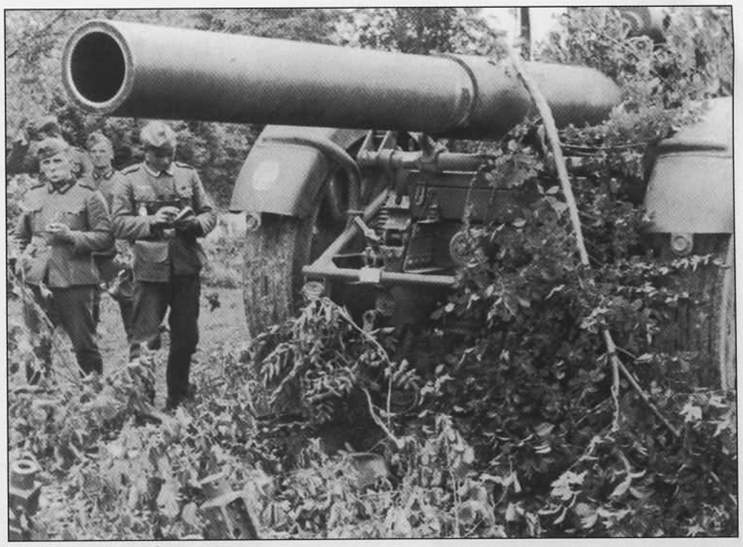
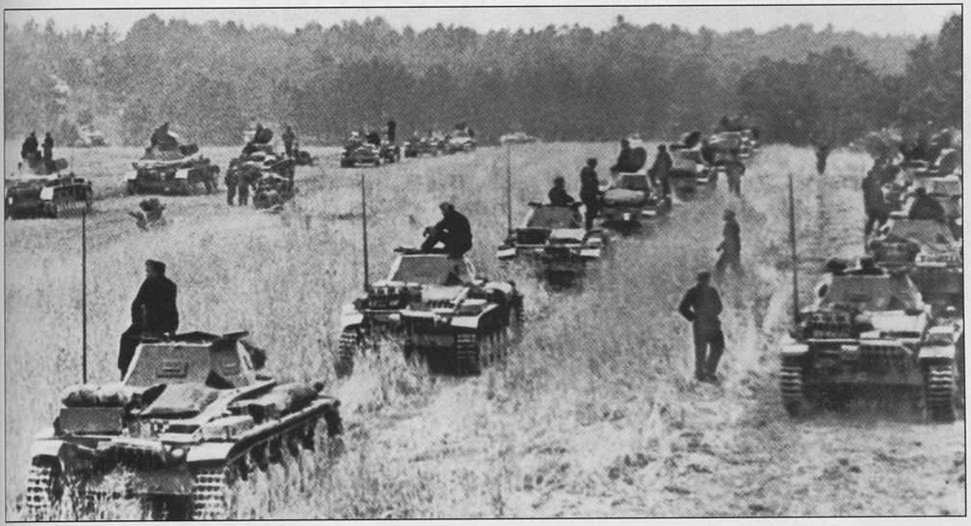
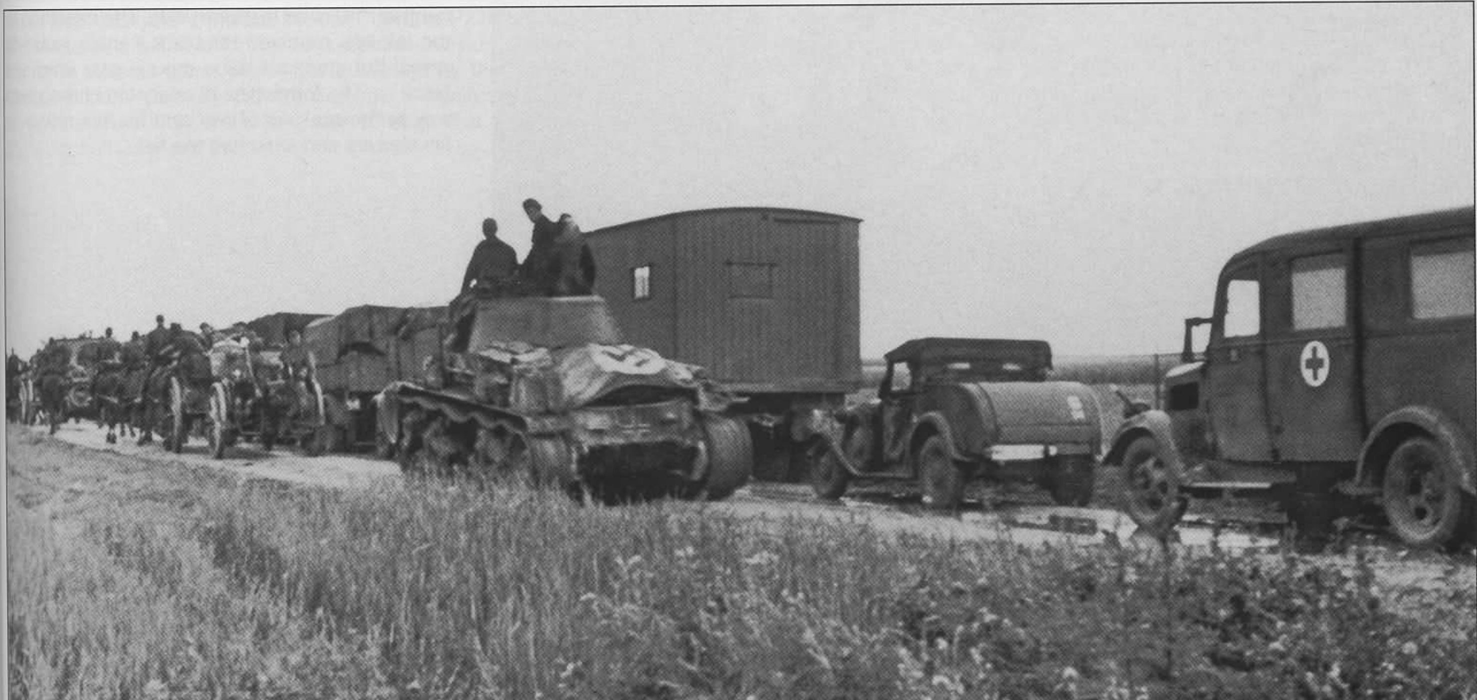




Two additional photographs of a 21cm Mörser 18. It would appear that this gun has been emplaced and subsequently concealed with foliage as the traverse platform is lowered and the wheels raised off the ground. Note the unusual barrel or keg emblem on the right mudguard from an unidentified unit.

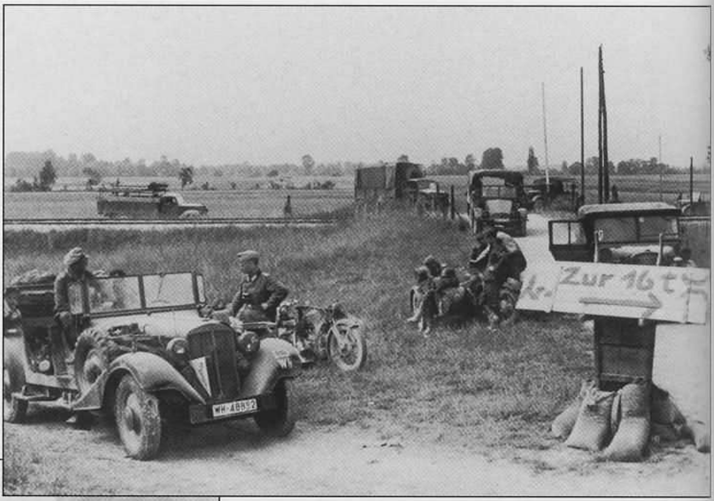


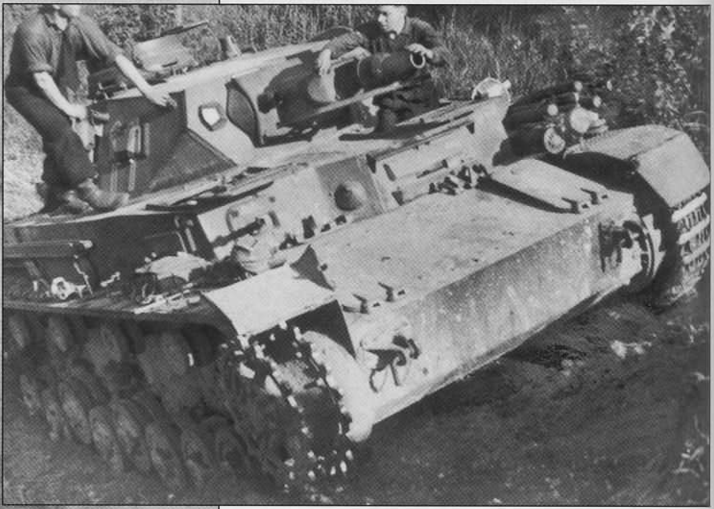
Hurry up and wait! Although the word "blitzkrieg" conjures up images of fast-moving tanks, the German Wehrmacht was no different than any other military force, then or now, and invariably spent more time waiting for things to happen than actually fighting. This is a group from 6.Panzer.Division, as evidenced by the Pz.Kpfw.35(t)s at the front of the first two columns. This was the only division to be equipped with this Czech-built tank. In the foreground are Panzer IIs and to the far left are a pair of Panzer IVs.



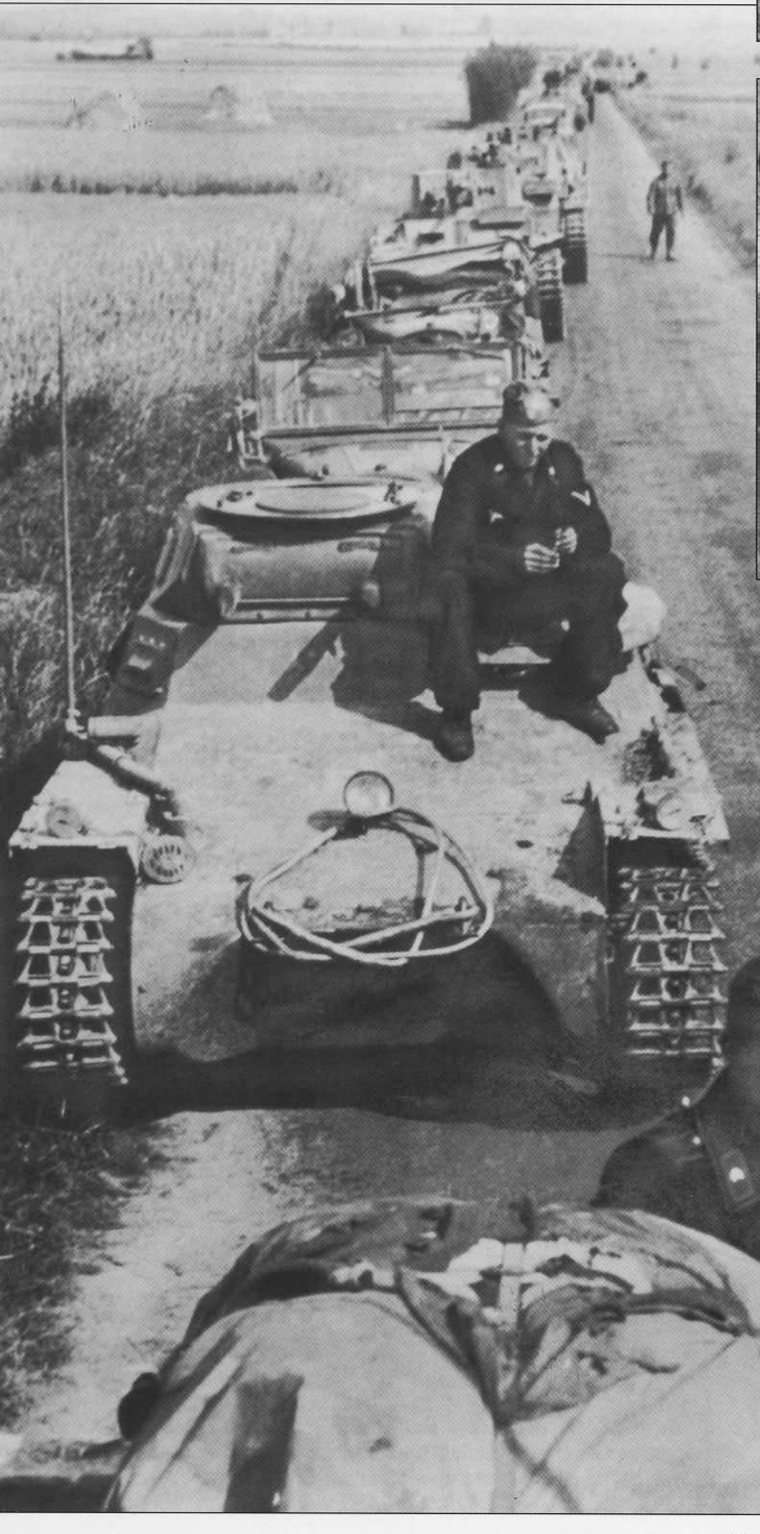
Another 6.Panzer-Division Pz.Kpfw.35(t) with a large air recognition flag draped across its engine deck follows a horse drawn column past a long line of cars and trucks. The unidentified car model carries the Panzergruppe Guderian "G" marking on its rear trunk. 6.Panzer-Division did not become a part of Guderian's group until Fall Rot so this photo was probably taken in early June 1940.

A hand-painted sign with the 6.Panzer-Division emblem points vehicles n the direction of a 16-ton bridge. The Horch 830 R to the left carries an unidentified pennant and an unusual tactical marking. While WH invariably stands for "Wehrmacht Heere" just as it does on the license plate, its exact meaning when used in conjunction with the infantry tactical sign is unclear. Behind the sign is a Kfz.15, followed by a Kfz.69 Krupp Protze and a couple of heavier 3-ton trucks. These vehicles all carry a white "G" on their windshield so the photo was once again taken in June 1940.

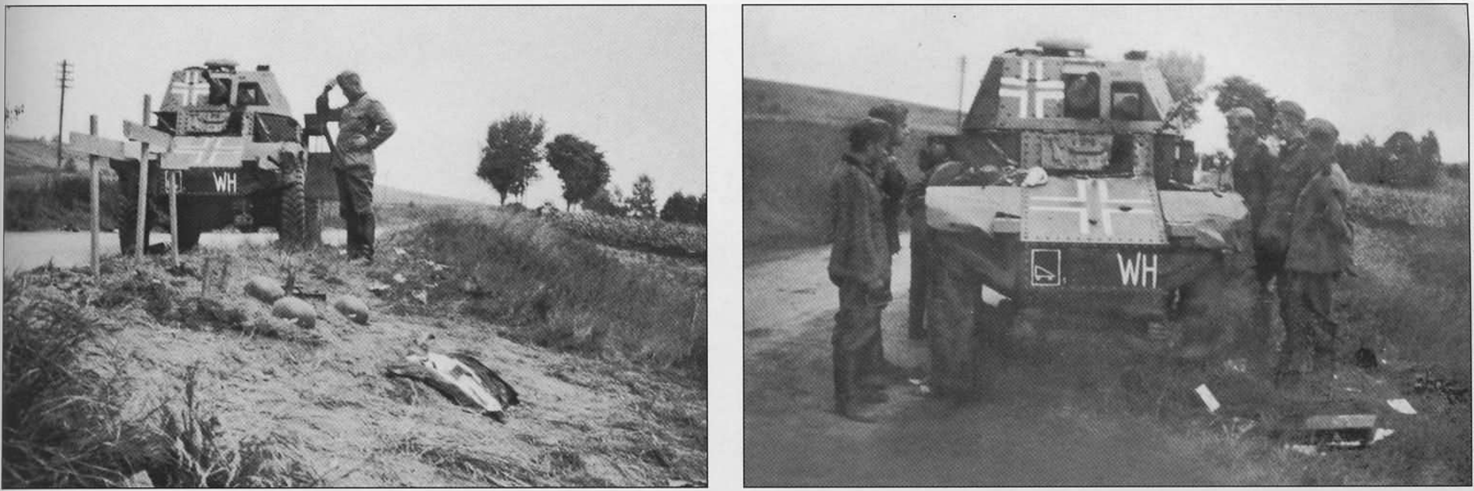




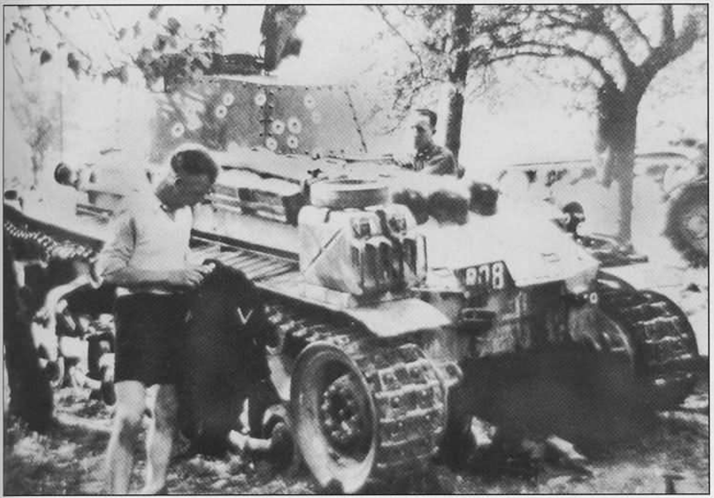
This disabled Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.D has shed a track and appears to have damaged roadwheels, probably the result of a mine. A divisional insignia appears to the right of the driver's visor but it is unclear if it is 2. or 7.Panzer-Division. Tactical number "11" is on the turret side. The crewman to the left has removed his black Panzer jacket to reveal the standard issue mouse gray shirt and black tie. The formalities of peacetime have given way to the realities of war and he has rolled up his sleeves and loosened the tie!



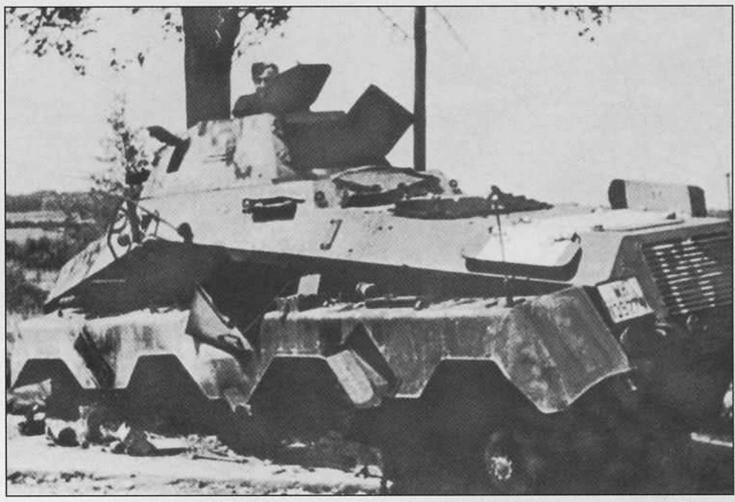
A column of vehicles from 7.Panzer-Division after the French capitulation on June 21, although hostilities continued until June 25 and elements of 7.Panzer-Division continued their advance until reaching Bordeaux. The divisional insignia is visible on the glacis plate of this Pz.Kpfw.I, which is following by a couple of passenger cars and Pz.Kpfw.38(t)s.



Two unique photographs of a AMD Panhard 178 French armored car that was captured and subsequently put to use by the Germans, only to be knocked out by its former owners on June 12 in the Champagne region. Two shell penetrations are clearly seen on the glacis and a portion of the driver's vision port cover has been damaged. The three occupants have been buried on the roadside complete with helmets and national flag. Between 200 and 300 Panhards were eventually taken into the Wehrmacht's inventory after the French surrender. Like the one shown here though, many were put to use immediately upon capture, after the application of large crosses to avoid friendly fire. These markings were obviously hand painted and the tactical marking is for an anti-tank unit. In this case, it is I/Panzerjäger Abteilung 5, which operated a least one other Panhard 178 with similar markings during Fall Rot.

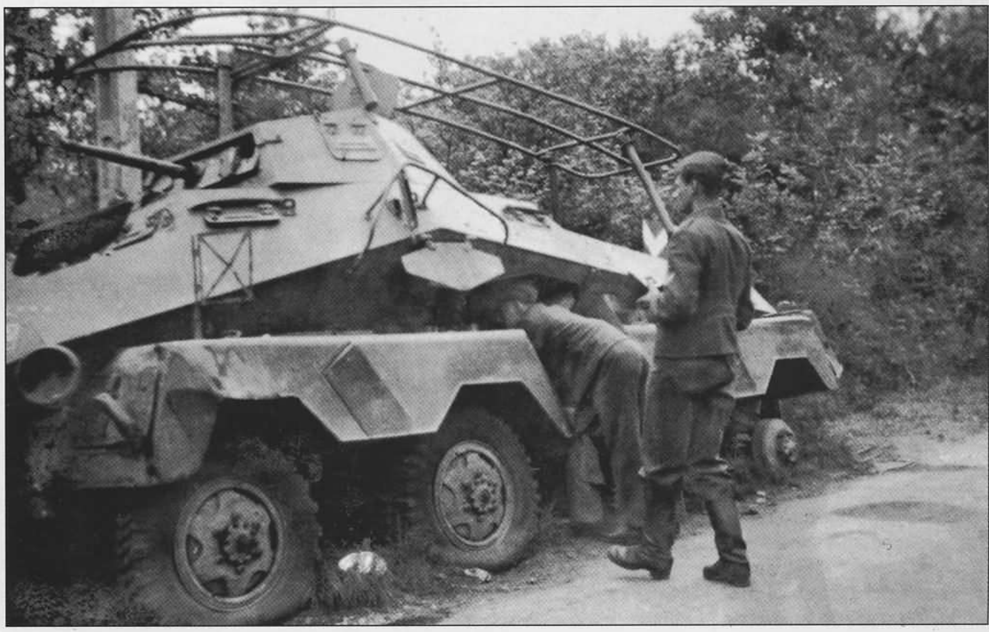


"R08" after the armistice in June, 1940, a Pz.Kpfw.35(t) belonging to the headquarters unit of Pz.Rgt.65 (6.Panzer-Division). The white circles on the turret indicate some of the hits sustained by this tank throughout the campaign that obviously did not damage it significantly. This photograph provides a good view of the jerry can stowage that was common on most 35(t)s for Fall Gelb and Rot.



A destroyed Sd.Kfz.231, license number WH139274, that clearly shows the large white aerial recognition rectangle, in this case extending onto the hull sides. The marking on the rear louvers is unidentified, but it may be some type of reference number for the recovery units. These vehicles were vulnerable to almost any fire, with a maximum armor thickness of only 15mm.

Two German soldiers examine a wrecked Sd.Kfz.232 radio car somewhere in France. For no apparent reason, the 7.Panzer-Division insignia appears twice, once behind the frame for a command pennant, and again at the front corner of the hull near the left edge of the picture. The marking below is unidentified. Notice the open port in the turret mantlet for the MG34, obviously removed by the crew while abandoning the vehicle.



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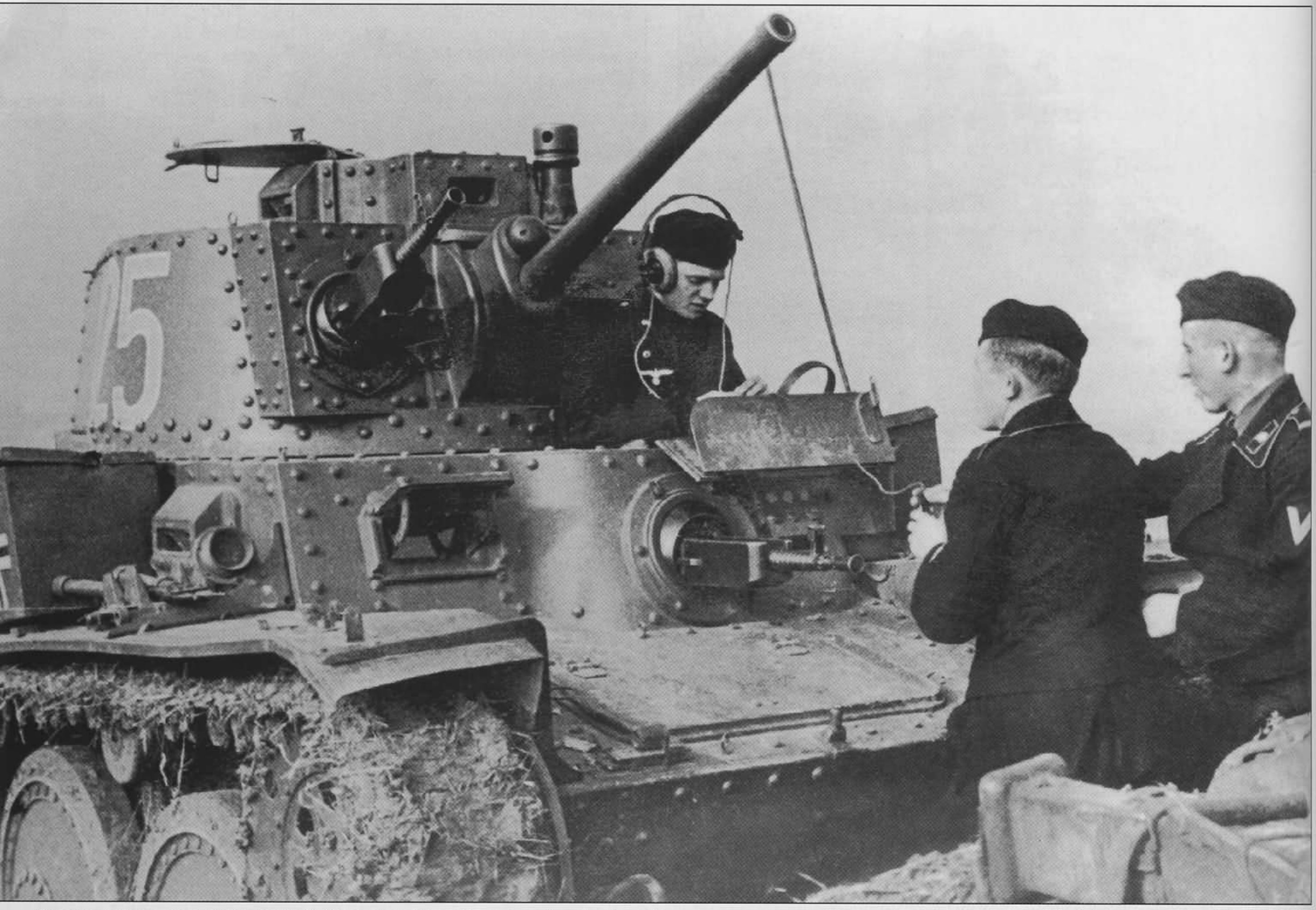
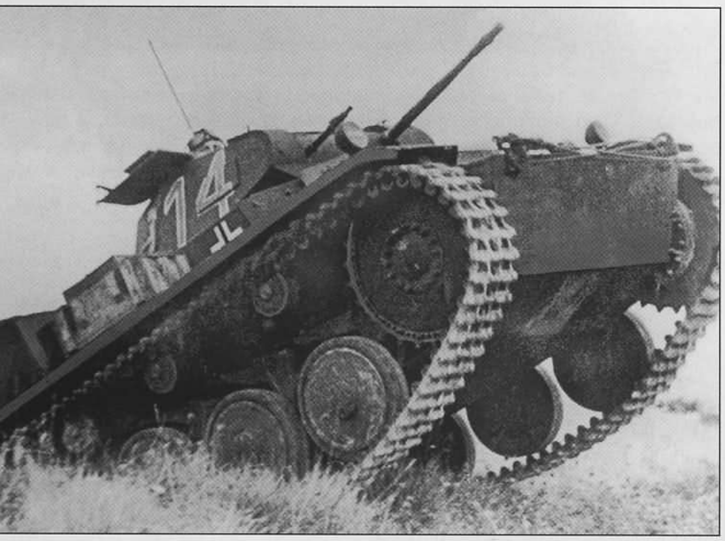
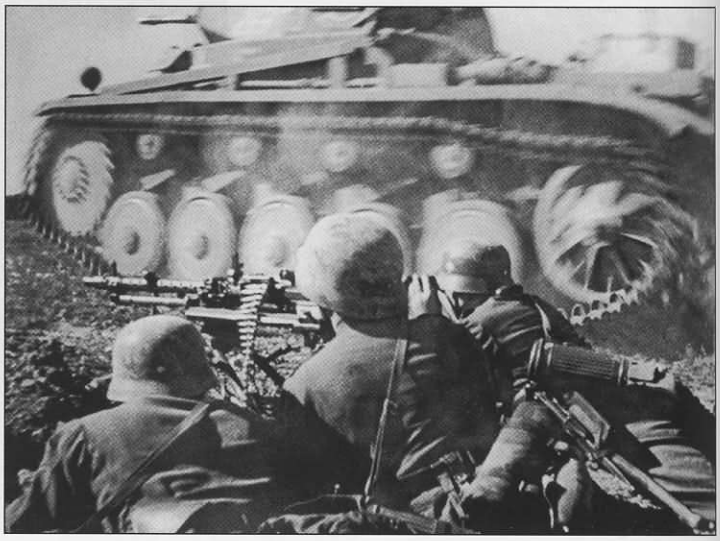


Crewmembers of a Pz.Kpfw.38(t) Ausf. C or D perform a radio check while on maneuvers in France in October 1940. All of them wear the black M1940 ield cap (Feldmutze) and the man on the right carries Obergefreiter (Lance-Corporal) rank insignia on his sleeve. The tank belongs to 7.Panzer-Division with he insignia below the open hatch and carries the characteristic large red and white turret numbers, in this case "25", although the first digit may not be visible.



The Panzerkampfwagen II was the most numerous tank to take part in Fall Gelb and Fall Rot. Although still effective as a reconnaissance vehicle, by 1940 it was obsolete as a main battle tank. Armor thickness was one problem and this photograph provides a unique view of the additional armor plate on the lower hull front. The picture is a still taken from the German propaganda film "Sieg im Westen" (Victory in the West). The tactical number "114" is prominently painted in red with white outline.



Another photograph of a fast moving 7.Panzer-Division Panzer II from he film "Sieg im Westen". Although blurred by the dust and movement, the ivisional emblem can be clearly seen above the antenna trough, as well as he large red and white tactical numbers on the turret. In the foreground is a eavy machine gun team armed with an MG34 mounted on a tripod. Their elmets appear to have some type of camouflage painting, but it could also simply be chipped and worn paint.

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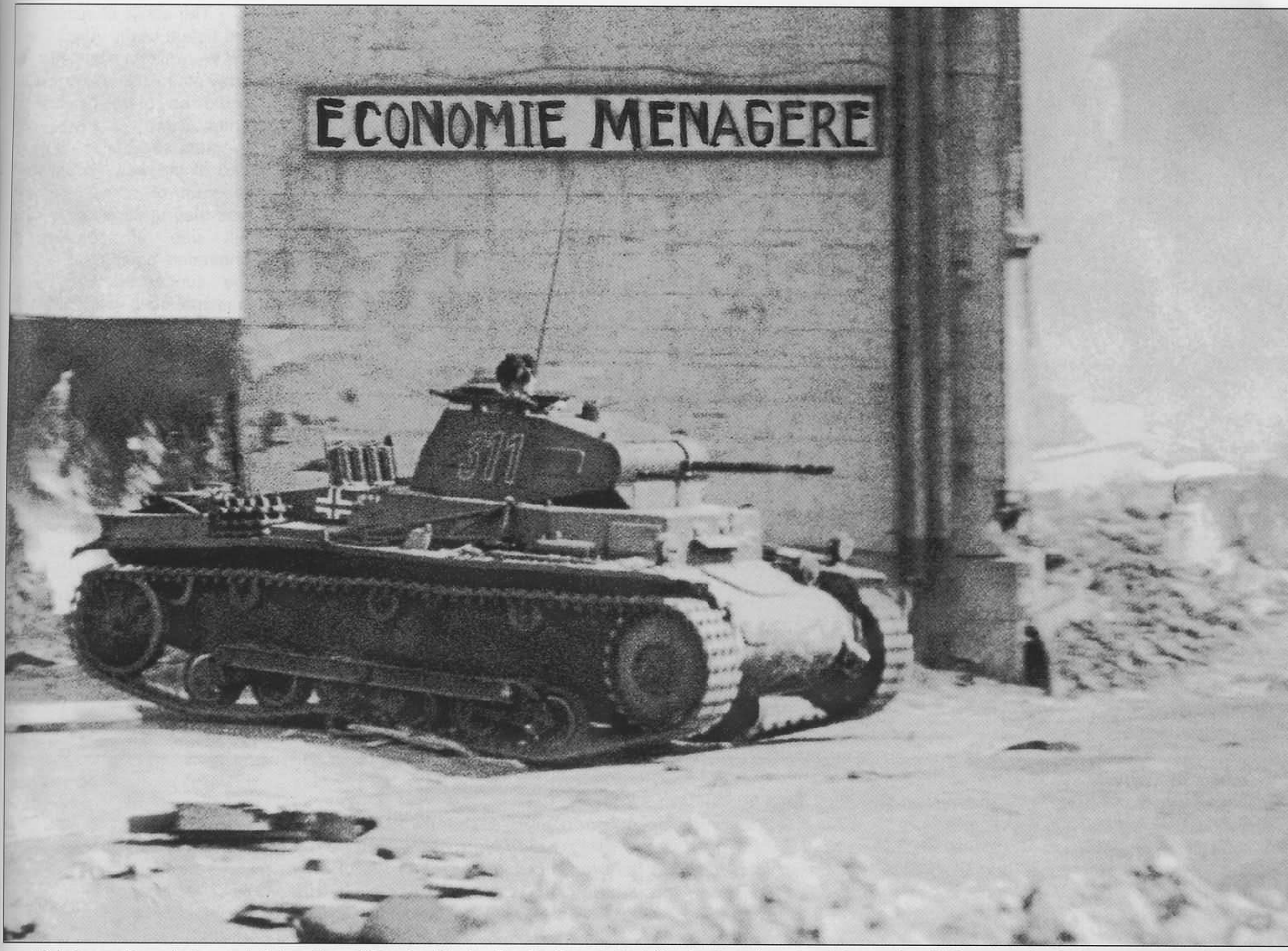
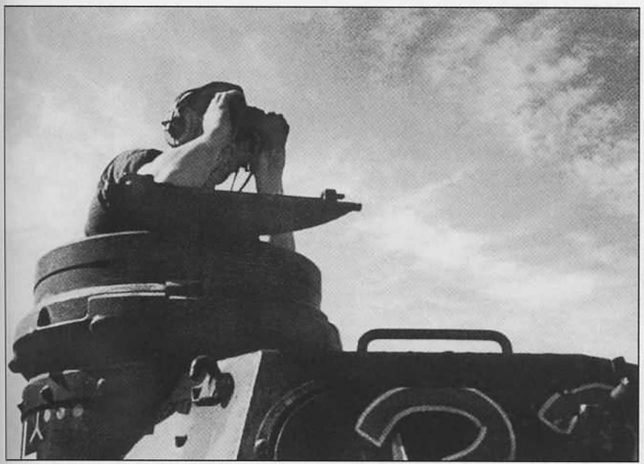
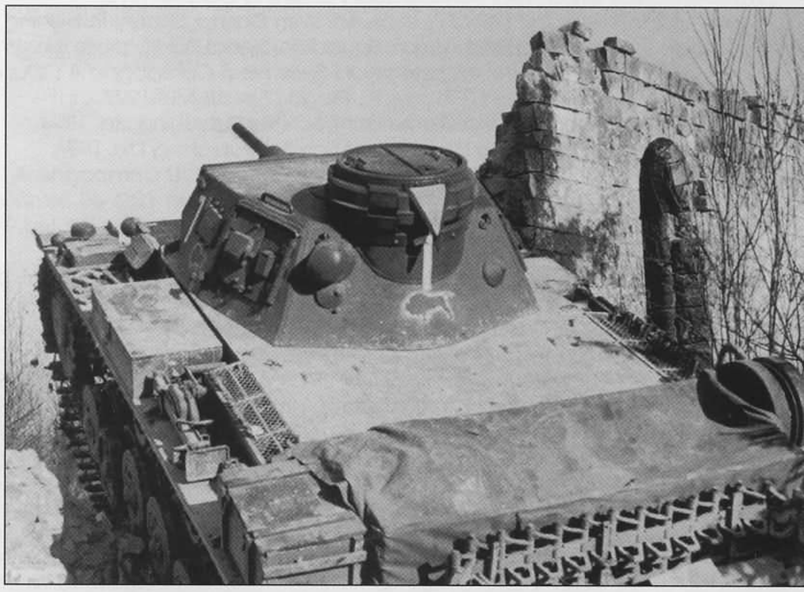


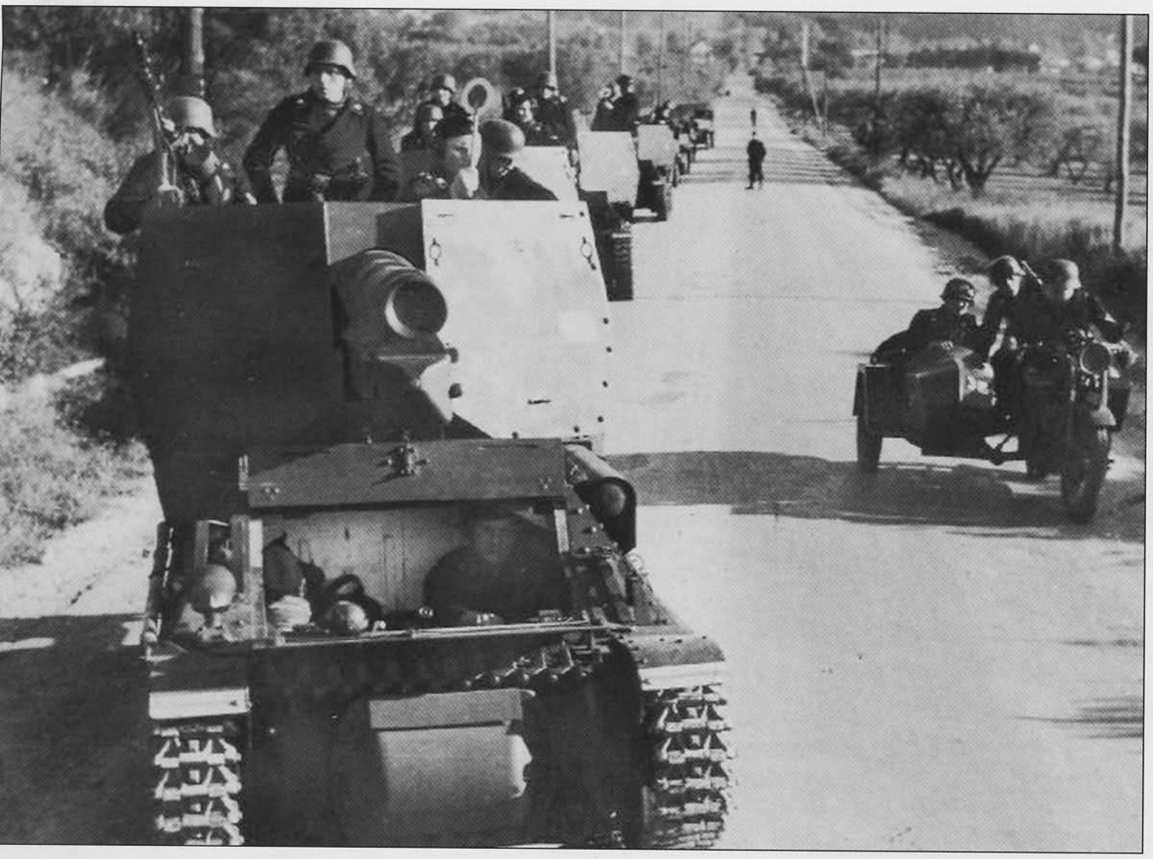
This is another photograph taken from "Sieg im Westen", with the original film footage in color. It is unclear if the assault of June 5 on the French town of Hangest depicted in the film is from the actual fighting, or staged as it appears. Other photos from the same sequence have been published elsewhere. The Pz.Kpfw.II is quite unique as it is an Ausf.b, of which only 25 were produced. The 7.Panzer-Division emblem is visible in front of the national cross and on the front of the superstructure.



A star is born! This Pz.Kpfw.IV commander is playing a role in "Sieg im Westen" by peering through his binoculars at something in the distance. The photo shows very clearly the emblem for 7.Panzer-Division on the cupola bulge, painted in yellow, and the red and white tactical numbers. A portion of the "balkankreuz" national insignia is also visible.



Prominently displaying the bison marking of Pz.Rgt.7 from 10.Panzer-Division, a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.G takes part in an exercise in France after the capitulation. With a tactical number "1" and an unidentified pennant hanging through one of the cupola vision slits, this is invariably a command vehicle. The pennant appears to be yellow or orange with a black outline. The stowage box mounted on the fender is similar to the one seen in a previous photograph so was probably a unit wide modification. The national marking is applied to the side of the box.



The spoils of victory. With the defeat of the Allied forces, the Wehrmacht inherited a vast array of tanks and vehicles that could be used by German units, and many would eventual see service until the end of the war. An ambitious program of conversion work was also undertaken to make full use of obsolete or unneeded equipment. One of the successful conversions was mounting the 15cm sFH 13 L/17 howitzer on the French Lorraine Schlepper, designated the Sd.Kfz.135/1. This photograph of a column stopped somewhere in France was probably taken in late 1942 or 1943, during a training exercise. Thirty 15cm Lorraine Schleppers went to Rommel's Afrika Korps, while the remaining 64 went to units stationed in France and eventually saw action when the Allies invaded in 1944. Of interest is the MG34 AA machine gun, which is seldom, if ever, seen in photographs of these vehicles.

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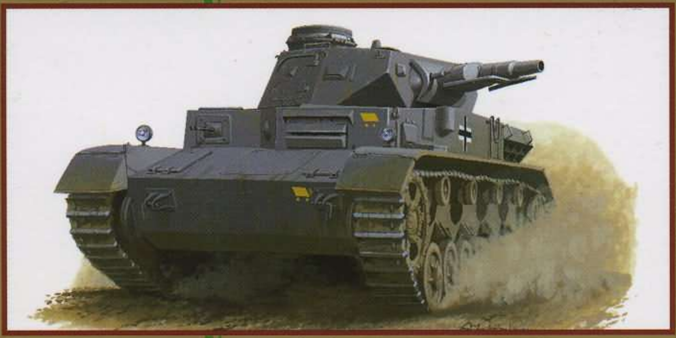

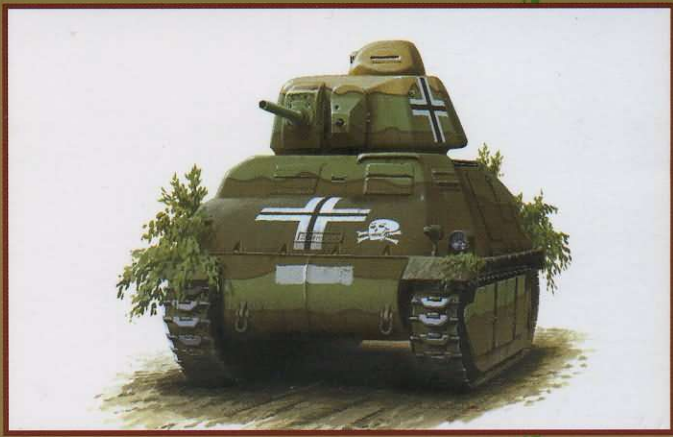

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